

RELIGIOUS IDEAS
of
BENITO PEREZ GALDOS

by

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A. B. University of Kansas, 1917.

Submitted to the Department of
Spanish and the Faculty of the
Graduate School of the University
of Kansas in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree
of Master of Arts.

Approved by:


Head of Department.

July 15, 1927.

The author wishes to express her sincere appreciation to Professor Arthur L. Owen for his kind assistance in this work.

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INTRODUCTION

Of all the interests which have engaged the attention of man, religion has proved the most potent and inspiring. It is one of the most essential characteristics of the intellectual and emotional life of mankind, and as such becomes one of the most pervasive and unescapable of subjects. Humanity has occupied itself from the beginning with that sense of relationship with higher powers, which has taken expression in innumerable forms of doctrine and ritual. Practically no community is without them. Individuals there are who appear to be religionless, because of their indifference or failure to acknowledge, wholly or in part, the form and laws accepted by their community, nation or race; and their fellows, with a sublimely egotistical sense of right, have been ever quick to judge and to condemn, forgetting that the sense -- to be sure in varying degrees -- of a higher relationship, a spiritual longing, is an almost universally inherent trait which seeks identical realities, though along different ways. The universality of religion, expressed in numberless cults, attests to this fact.

There are many persons who feel that compared to the great ages of faith of the past our modern age has no religion. They lay the blame on science and general

progress. Is it because they are too firmly bound by traditional beliefs to recognize the possible advantages in a religion which has its authority in the nature of man rather than in revelation? Our age is still in a transition period and may seem irreligious, but spiritual hunger is as fundamental in man today as in the past, and through successive adjustments is ever struggling to progress towards realization.

It is natural, therefore, regardless of age or place, that in the study of the life of a great man, in history or literature, people should be interested in the spiritual side of his nature. How much did it effect his own life and, as a consequence of his influence, the lives of others? What was his attitude toward his fellowmen, what were his beliefs, his hopes -- his philosophy of life?

The religion of Benito Pérez Galdós, son of a country as traditionally religious as is Spain, and one of her leading men of letters, is a matter of interest to his wide circle of readers both at home and abroad, and has been the cause of considerable controversy. There are a few who have termed him atheistic, more have called him anti-Catholic -- while a greater number, although rejecting these charges, consider him radically anti-clerical.

We have the testimony of Galdós' friend and biographer, Clarín, that " Galdós was a religious man"⁽¹⁾. For verification we must go to his vast collection of writings. But even in them, it requires careful discernment to determine what are the ideas of the author himself, and what ideas form a part of the artistic development of his characters. This is especially difficult in Galdós because of his impersonal manner in his productions, which are without exception written objectively.

The life of Pérez Galdós was so fully occupied in study and travel, in observing the life about him, and reproducing it in the novels and dramas which constitute his large production, -- a living monument of his love for humanity and his desire to serve it, -- that he had little time for personal speculation and introspection. A study of his biography and his writings reveals him as a man of retirement and simple habits, wholly absorbed in his work and study, forgetting himself in his desire to render a practical service by telling the truth as he saw it in regard to Spanish society, because he believed that it would be a stimulus and guide in the modern progressive movement toward reform. His own statement when asked for his biography is evidence of the modesty and selflessness of the man: "My biography? It can be told in

(1) Clarín (Leopoldo Alas): GALDÓS, in OBRAS COMPLETAS, Vol. I, Madrid, 1912.

a few words: I have spent all my life working."⁽¹⁾

In the following pages the aim will be to try to discover what were the religious ideas of Pérez Galdós. The study is based upon the few biographies of him, the critical reviews of his novels, and chiefly upon his novels of contemporary Spanish life and customs, which cover the most productive period and contain probably the most essential part of his philosophy. The treatment of the subject matter of the novels in relation to the author himself, to his purpose, and to his ideals, will furnish the material for discussion, and little attention will be given to the literary merit of his art as such, which is already sufficiently acknowledged. Words to Galdós, as to all virile writers, were a medium of expression, and he did not believe in art for art's sake. Though his expression is not always of even quality, it is natural and without affectation; his plots are logical, his observation minutely accurate, his character delineation masterful, all to the extent that his rank in the literary world stands undisputed. And, however deep may have been his interest in the welfare of his country, and however sincere his reformer's spirit, he was first of all an artist, and it is

(1) Pagano, León: AL TRAVÉS DE LA ESPAÑA LITERARIA, VOL.II, Barcelona, N.D., p., 95

necessary to keep this fact in mind while attempting to find in his artistic creations the soul of a man with such universal sympathies as Galdós.

There can be no question in the minds of those who have read at least a half dozen of Galdós' novels, that their author was not an atheist. The spirit of human service, of tolerance, and faith in mankind, and the doctrine of brotherly love, the most Christian of Christian manifestations, which pervade all his works could not emanate from one who denied God. Besides the author of ANGEL GUERRA and of NAZARÍN believed in immortality.

Whether Galdós may be called anti-Catholic or not, depends upon the interpretation of the word. In the strictest sense he was not Catholic, but judging by the same standard, neither were nine-tenths of his contemporaries, and the same may be said of those who today profess the faith, and presume to judge others as anti-Catholic. There are very few persons who obey all the laws laid down by the church. On the other hand there are many who tend towards the latitudinarianism, which Don Angel condemns in GLORIA. (1)

(1) GLORIA; Madrid, 1916, Vol. I, p. 241.

Galdós never attacks the Catholic dogma. In exposing the theatrical vanity, the emptiness of certain of the church's ceremonies and forms, he is impelled by a sincere zeal for truth which he hopes may help eventually to bring about a beneficent reform, in which the church of his people will resume its sublime mission of teaching the gospel of love, and the brotherhood of man, and place human as well as spiritual interests above selfish ones,-- a reform in which the church will be restored to its early simplicity and be divested of the material trappings which have come to seem paramount in themselves, rather than the means to an end; a reform in which will be severed the bonds of tradition, which have hindered the church from adapting itself to healthful progress and change in human affairs.

The most worthwhile loyalty is critical loyalty. Galdós was a Christian, and also a Catholic in the spirit if not the letter of the word. That Catholicism should lay so much stress on form and on tradition, and demand uncritical loyalty in all that pertains to it is evidence of a form of degeneracy, from the true Christian spirit of disinterested spiritual service, towards selfish interests and temporal powers. The Catholic institution, as all others, needs more men who speak and write in a spirit of critical loyalty, not men who, for

numerous social and economic reasons, publically affect a loyalty which has many mental reservations attached. Too much loyalty is stultifying, deadening to general welfare and progress, and in its very glorification of its ideal tends to cover the weakness, which, if exposed and corrected, would make for strength. But it requires courage and the strength of ones convictions to be an honest critic. Nowhere does Galdós attack the religious dogma in itself. The religious question is introduced because of its universal appeal, and because of its prominence in social history at the time Galdós began writing, and is examined in his books not from a theological or philosophical standpoint, but from a sociological view, and as a matter of human interest.

Nearly all of Galdós' work is in one way or another a protest against intolerance, His seemingly anti-clerical attitude is another manifestation of it, as it is also inspired by the corruption of the clergy, which had its origin in their ecclesiastical immunity. Nowhere does one feel that Galdós would wish to abolish the clergy. He would, however, restrict the influence of the priests. In a few of his novels, especially in *DOÑA PERFECTA* and *LA FAMILIA DE LEÓN ROCH*, Galdós deplores, the power of the clergymen over credulous practitioners,

who seem to believe that the priests, by virtue of their office are invested with divine inspiration, and forget that they are human beings -- with human weaknesses. His novels are filled with priests of all characters and types, and many of them show the result of the "impulso-logia," a term coined by Galdós in ANGEL GUERRA which refers to the inevitable outcropping of one's real nature and impulses through his veneer of education and training. He regrets the fact, and directs attention to it, that modern Christianity, as generally understood and accepted, has become little more than a mere traditional form, in which the real spirit and meaning are lacking. Thus to him, conventional religion, though it exercises much power for good, all too frequently degenerates in many of its supporters into narrowness, emptiness and intolerance, so that constant vigilance, open-mindedness and adaptability are required if it is to do its greatest good.

BIOGRAPHICAL BACKGROUND

Among Spain's prominent novelists, Pereda, Palacio Valdés, Valera and Pardo Bazán, who have succeeded with striking independence of manner in composing the remarkable mass of fiction which depicts so adequately modern Spain, and has given to her her high rank in modern literature, Benito Pérez Galdós stands as the most prolific and at the same time the most universal in his appeal. His works embrace the entire nineteenth century, and afford the clearest and fullest account of the social and spiritual life of his nation anywhere to be found. Through them he has not only won an international reputation, but, of his contemporaries, was also the most popularly adored and acclaimed by his fellow countrymen as the greatest literary genius which Spain has produced since the seventeenth century. "Galdós is the most universal of the contemporary Spanish novelists, and the one who has won the most laurels for Spain, because he is the most Spanish of the universal novelists."⁽¹⁾

Benito Pérez Galdós was born May 10, 1843 in Las Palmas, Grand Canary Island, a province of Spain. His father was a military officer; his mother the daughter of a distinguished Basque family. Galdós was the youngest of several children. Over the door of the house in

(1) Galvez, Pedro Luis de: Homenaje a Galdós, in EL ATENEO, Vol. III, (1907), p. 426.

which he was born is a plate put up by the city government on which is inscribed: "Here was born Benito Pérez Galdós, the greatest, the truest, and most universal glory of the Canary Islands."⁽¹⁾

Little is known of the early life of Galdós. Not even any reminiscences of his childhood in Las Palmas, and his extreme modesty, -- almost an eccentricity -- which prevented his talking about himself made it difficult for his biographers to discover even the few details known. His early training was under the direction of English teachers in Las Palmas, where a large proportion of the population is English and Protestant, and it is no doubt in part due to his having spent his impressionable years in this atmosphere of international and inter-religious harmony that he developed his fine sense of impartiality, and his sincere admiration for the English. The fact that he was born outside of Spain probably also accounts somewhat as Fitzmaurice-Kelley suggests, for his "exotic modernity" and the spirit of objectivity which is often denied those born on Peninsular soil.⁽²⁾

In 1863 he was sent to Madrid to study law, and he completed the course six years later after intervals

(1) Olmet, Luis Antón del, y Arturo García Carraffa: GALDÓS in (Los grandes españoles, Vol. I.) Madrid, 1912, p. 23.

(2) Fitzmaurice, Kelly, James: CHAPTERS ON SPANISH LITERATURE, London, 1908, p. 247.

of traveling and of trying his hand at writing plays which, however, were never published. He would cut his classes to "wander through the streets and squares, and alleys, taking pleasure in observing the restless life of the capital city ---," and Galdós adds, "if my days were spent in idling through the streets, part of my nights were spent in scribbling dramas."⁽¹⁾

Galdós' artistic temperament and live imagination did not lend themselves easily to legal pursuits, and not possessing the gift of oratory essential to that profession, he did not go into law practice, but turned to journalism, in which he did all kinds of writing and reporting. This work served him well in his development as an author even though it fastened on him the defects of haste and a certain carelessness inevitable in journalistic writing. In 1870 appeared his first novel LA FONTANA DE ORO, which he had planned while still in college, and with its publication made a definite start in his career as author which he pursued so indefatigably until his death January 4, 1920.

Galdós' first years in Madrid came at the time of stirring political, social and religious upheavals, which had a marked effect on his nature. "These events," said Galdós, "left a vivid impression on me, and have influenced consid-

(1) Pérez Galdós, Benito: Memorias de un desmemoriado, in LA ESFERA, III, (1916), Chap. I.

erably my literary temperament." (1) His imagination was keenly alive to the aspects of that great period of the awakening of Spain, in which she heroically freed herself from Napoleonic tyranny, and gradually advanced toward modernity in spite of the stubborn opposition of the representatives of her traditional religion and worn out social order, but unfortunately, without banishing the disorganization which afflicted her. The social and moral dissolution attendant on the Revolution and reform supply the material upon which Galdós drew in his "Contemporary Novels", and one can find in it the explanation of the psychology of many of these novels.

A small income from family property kept Galdós from being entirely dependent on his pen for a living. He traveled extensively through Europe, ever observant of the life and customs he found there. He was an enthusiastic admirer of Balzac, and while in Paris the first time, bought and read all of his works. Dickens likewise won his admiration; "I looked upon Charles Dickens as my most beloved teacher. During my literary apprenticeship, when I had not yet outgrown my petulant youth, I had scarcely devoured the COMÉDIE HUMAINE of Balzac when I applied myself with mad eagerness to the copious work of Dickens." (2)

(1) Olmet y Carraffa, Op. cit. p.30

(2) Galdós, In LA ESFERA, Chap. 12.

After his trips abroad, he traveled through Spain, generally third class and always by day, living in continual contact with the people, with his mind always open to ideas, and eager to learn their customs and their traditions, to discover their hopes and ambitions, their natures and emotions. Nothing remained hidden from his fine observation. These impressions formed an inexhaustible treasury of data upon which he drew for his books. Galdós gives his own estimation of their value: "The knowledge which I acquired, the habits and peculiarities which I observed in regard to Spanish social life, were for me a precious fortune which I would not exchange for the riches which the miner extracts from the earth."⁽¹⁾

Galdós had no serious love affairs and never married. His loves were the country, his travels, and art in all its aspects. He had considerable talent in painting. While quite young two of his drawings received honorable mention at an Exposition in Las Palmas. He illustrated some of his EPISODIOS NACIONALES himself. Music was another of his predilections, and there are many references in his works to composers and musical compositions. He had tried his hand at poetry too, writing his early dramas in verse. Galdós was especially fond

(1) Idem, Chap. XI.

of children. This fact is reflected with delightful delicacy in the naturalness and charm of his child creations, as for instance, the adorable "Monina" in LEÓN ROCH, precious "Ción" in ANGEL GUERRA, Celipín and the elfin Marianela;⁽¹⁾ or in the incident of the childhood of María Egipciaca and Luis Gonzaga⁽²⁾ who longing to repeat some of the experiences of which they read in the early lives of saints, followed the example of Santa Teresa, and set out to capture some Moors. After wandering all day, "they fell asleep under the protection of a rock, and there the author of all things, God omnipotent, gave them a kiss, and delivered them into the hands of the civil guard who took them back home."⁽³⁾ In every way Galdós was understanding, sympathetic, kind and charitable, a lover of his fellowmen. His fast friendship with his illustrious contemporary Pereda, in spite of the radical difference in their ideas in politics and religion, is marked evidence of his breadth, and his consideration for the rights of the individual. "In fact," he remarks, "neither was Don José María Pereda so clerical as some believe, nor was I such a vehement rationalist as others suppose."⁽⁴⁾

(1) MARIANELA, N.Y., 1923.

(2) LA FAMILIA DE LEÓN ROCH, Madrid, 1920, Vol. I, p. 82.

(3) Ibid.

(4) Galdós, in LA ESPERA, Chap. III.

Although Galdós had little liking for politics, his reformer's spirit and patriotic impulses led him to affiliate with the Republican party, and in 1907 he was elected by it, deputy from Madrid. Previously, from 1886 to 1890 he had acted as Liberal deputy for Porto Rico.

Galdós' life was never one of intense emotions nor adversities. His life was in the main a tranquil one, filled with work and study, and enlivened by the impressions of his interesting journeys, and pleasant contacts in the tertulias of the Ateneo and the conferences of parliament. His extraordinary success was due to the fact that he united to his "prodigious talent and his analytical spirit, an exquisite sensibility that makes him notice everything, love all and be interested in all." (1)

In 1897 Galdós became a member of the Spanish Academy. In 1912 he became totally blind, but continued his reading and writing with the aid of a secretary.

Galdós spent the last years of his busy life writing in the field of the drama, and attained considerable success in it, but it is as a novelist that he won greatest renown. With the successful reception of LA FONTANA DE ORO, he inaugurated a period of productive activity which

(1) Contreras, Ruiz: MEMORIAS DE UN DESMEMORIADO, Vol. I, Madrid, N.D., p. 68.

resulted in the publication of about four novels a year. His novels fall naturally into two groups: historical romances and realistic novels. The first group, called the EPISODIOS NACIONALES, was begun in 1873 with the publication of TRAFALGAR. There are four complete series of ten novels each, and the fifth series, which was never completed has six novels. The EPISODIOS NACIONALES present in an interesting manner the historical facts of the XIX century, and by the inter-relationship of historical and fictional persons and events form a remarkable series. They compare in scope to Balzac's: HUMAN COMEDY, and the works of Erckman-Chatrain, Zola and Dumas. Spain's renowned scholar and critic, Menéndez y Pelayo, speaks of them as "one of the happiest creations of Spanish literature in our century."⁽¹⁾

However great was the reputation which the EPISODIOS NACIONALES made for Galdós in Spain, it is his realistic novels for which he is best known in foreign lands. He himself designated them as his NOVELAS ESPAÑOLAS CONTEMPORANEAS, the first seven of which are classified as NOVELAS DE LA PRIMERA ÉPOCA. Altogether there are twenty-eight novels published in thirty-nine volumes. These novels he wrote alternately with his EPISODIOS, beginning

(1) Menéndez y Pelayo: ESTUDIOS DE CRÍTICA LITERARIA. Vol. V, Madrid, 1908, p. 105.

with the publication of DOÑA PERFECTA in 1876. While the EPISODIOS deal with the political strife and stirring events of the early part of the century, the NOVELAS ESPAÑOLAS CONTEMPORANEAS have their setting in Galdós' own time, and are concerned with existing national and social problems, and with the mental and moral struggles of man. In them Galdós is a standard-bearer of reform and progress, and he strikes sure and vigorous blows at the indifference and the backwardness of his people, not desirous of emphasizing the distress and woe arising from them, but the folly and lack of intelligence which perpetuates such a state of things.

Among the questions which agitated society, Galdós gave especial importance to the religious problem, the political question of "caciquismo" or bossism, and the lamentable state of social dissolution. He does not attempt to solve them, but by an impartial presentation of facts to understand them. He never obtrudes his purpose to the extent of destroying the artistic unity of his works and making of them mere propaganda novels. He writes clearly the truth as he sees it and leaves the conclusions largely to his readers. Galdós is the true founder of the school which has as its aim the modernization of Spain by bringing it into touch with the ideas and ideals of the rest of modern Europe.

The following study is based principally upon these two groups of novels, the extensive analyses being concentrated on those books in which different phases of the religious question is primarily developed. In the first three DOÑA PERFECTA, GLORIA, and LA FAMILIA DE LEÓN ROCH, his early novels, there is a somewhat didactic tendency in the development of their theses, but in ANGEL GUERRA, NAZARÍN, and HALMA, later novels, the treatment grows broader and more reflective. Many of the other novels, though they treat primarily other problems which claimed Galdós' interest, contain material essential to the understanding of the religious state of Spanish society and the attitude of their author, and will have a place in this study.

ANTI-CLERICALISM

DOÑA PERFECTA

GLORIA

LA FAMILIA DE LEÓN ROCH

Among Galdós' novels, the three which have occasioned the greatest controversy as to their author's purpose, his religious ideas and Catholic integrity, are DOÑA PERFECTA, GLORIA, and LA FAMILIA DE LEÓN ROCH. In these are concentrated his so-called anti-clerical prepossessions, which have given rise to certain accusations that Galdós, in assailing fanaticism and bigotry in the religious constitution of his fellow-Spaniard, exposes himself to the charge of fanaticism in his manner of attack. To quote J. D. M. Ford in his MAIN CURRENTS IN SPANISH LITERATURE⁽¹⁾ a corollary of anti-clericalism to Galdós is, that "the faithful practitioner of Catholicism is always under the priestly thumb, and is always a blind bigot," and that in his attacks, he presents pictures of certain phases of Spanish life which are "gross libels of actuality. All this is a great pity. Galdós is one of the most powerful novelists of the modern world, but he has let the spirit of propaganda betray him into injustice and unrighteousness."⁽²⁾

The greater pity is, that an author of such acknowledged power should be judged with so little understanding. A superficial reading of the three books mentioned might give

(1) N.Y., 1919, p. 240.

(2) Idem, p. 241.

such an impression, but a careful and unbiased perusal of them, followed by a reading of NAZARÍN, ANGEL GUERRA, and FORTUNATA Y JACINTA, the three novels, which with GLORIA, rank as the most significant in their author's production, must show the utter injustice -- even absurdity, of the above statements. The error lies in the misinterpretation of purpose. It is evident that it is not Galdós' aim to show Doña Perfecta as a type of Spanish mother, nor María Egipcíaca⁽¹⁾ as a type of Spanish wife. Neither are the ignorant, intolerant, or scheming priests general types. They represent only a few of the vast Galdósian hierarchy in which both good and bad must inevitably be found.

Nor can it be said that all of Galdós' favorite heroes are scientists and engineers. They, as representatives of the progress for which he stood, are doubtless among his favorite types, but they are only a few among his innumerable and splendid creations. And it should be noticed that their end is usually tragic, as in the death of Pepe Rey,⁽²⁾ or the barren existence and disillusionment of León Roch, results on the one hand of the stubborn ten-

(1) LA FAMILIA DE LEÓN ROCH

(2) DOÑA PERFECTA

acity to traditional forms, suspicion and intolerance of things new, in many of their contemporaries, especially in the small towns, and on the other hand, the tactlessness and lack of sympathy of many progressives. Galdós' scientists and rationalists are men born before their time in Spain, or educated beyond their environment, pioneers who must be martyrs to their cause. Both sides suffer in such a case, but it is a necessary development in the cause of progress.

Even in his first group of novels of customs, to which belong DOÑA PERFECTA, GLORIA, and LEÓN ROCH, which were written in the youthful period of life when enthusiasm and zeal for reform are inclined to take radical forms, Galdós maintained a certain prudence and generosity, and never deserves the name of a fanatic reformer.

The novel DOÑA PERFECTA has provoked many criticisms, both favorable and unfavorable -- the number of these probably being due to the issue involved, and to its popularity in countries outside of Spain. Perhaps the most just and at the same time one of the best interpretations of the author's evident intention and spirit in which he wrote is that of W. D. Howells:

"DOÑA PERFECTA is first of all a story, and a great story, but it must appear at times potently and even bit-

terly anti-Catholic. Yet it would be a pity and an error to read it with the preoccupation that it was an anti-Catholic tract, for it is not that. If the persons were changed in name and place, and modified in passion to fit a cooler air, it might equally seem an anti-Presbyterian, or anti-Baptist tract; for what it shows in the light of their own hatefulness and cruelty, are perversions of any religion, and creed. It is not a tract, however; but it deals in artistic largeness with the passion of bigotry, as it deals with the passions of love, of ambition, of revenge. But Galdós is Spanish and Catholic, and for him bigotry wears a Spanish and Catholic face. That is all."⁽¹⁾

The tragedy of bigotry is the thesis of DOÑA PERFECTA. Intolerant and suspicious of everything new, the little village of Orbajosa and its leading citizen Doña Perfecta clannishly and jealously defend their traditional beliefs and customs against Doña Perfecta's nephew Pepe Rey, a young engineer. He figures as a representative of rational modernity, and in his turn is none too patient with the backwardness and smug self-satisfaction of the town.

He has come to Orbajosa at the invitation of Doña Perfecta to marry her daughter Rosario, an arrangement

(1) Howells, W. D. : "Introduction" to edition of DOÑA PERFECTA, (Harper Bros.) N.Y., N.D., p. 6.

made by Doña Perfecta and Pepe's father, to whom she is heavily indebted for a past favor. Although cordially received by his aunt and Rosario, he soon finds himself unwittingly entangled in a maze of irritating misunderstandings, lawsuits, humiliations, and slander, the real source of which is the friend and confessor of Doña Perfecta, Don Inocencio. The priest, actuated by his love and ambition for his nephew Jacinto, desires to see him the husband of Rosario, and this ambition is about to be realized when Pepe Rey's appearance threatens its success. Goaded on by Jacinto's mother, for whom the son represents the totality of existence, the priest succeeds in making Dona Perfecta believe her nephew a heartless atheist, seeking marriage with her daughter for mercenary reasons, and suggests various subterfuges whereby they can send him away without openly rejecting his suit and offending his father. Rosario's and Pepé's love for each other, however, compels the latter to stay and attempt to free her from her mother's tyranny. The conflict of excited passions, concealed until now, breaks out into the open, Pepe leaves his aunt's home to lodge at an inn, and through the assistance of a soldier friend, succeeds in having secret meetings with Rosario. The climax comes when Doña Perfecta, learning of Pepe's presence in the garden one night, is overcome

with blind rage, and orders one of her henchmen to kill him.

The tragic results of this conflict of violent passions is the death of Pepe Rey, the ensuing insanity of Rosario, the despair of the mother who endeavors to find consolation in religious devotions and in the financing of splendid pageants, and the remorse of the priest, who overwhelmed and taciturn resigns his office in the cathedral.

The death of Pepe Rey is not the result of murder instigated by malice but the inevitable result of the interworking of characters and events, the effect of the uncontrolled passion of hatred, which, though developing from acts and facts insignificant in themselves, can, even involuntarily, precipitate tragedy.

The irreproachable habits and outward amiability of Doña Perfecta, which gave her such great prestige in Orbajosa were not artifices of hypocrisy; they were genuine. She was wholly absorbed in the letter of moral and religious law, and had lost sight of the real meaning and spirit of it -- if she had ever known it. By nature hard and uncompromising, she gave to charity because it is the duty of a Christian to do so. For the same reason she would abide by the prohibitive moral laws, and therefore could not have maliciously planned the murder of her nephew. Her order to her henchman to kill Pepe came from a momentary impulse

of destructive vengeance born of anger and a hatred that she had allowed to develop uncontrolled. To quote the author: "We don't know what Doña Perfecta would have been, loving. Hating, she had the fiery vehemence of an angel of hatred and discord among men. Such is the effect produced on a character naturally hard, and without inborn goodness, by religious exaltation, when this, instead of drawing its nourishment from conscience and truth revealed in simple and beautiful principles, seeks its nutrition in narrow formulas dictated solely by ecclesiastical interests. In order that religious fanaticism should be inoffensive, the heart in which it exists must be very pure."⁽¹⁾

The power which Don Inocencio wields in Doña Perfecta's household is that of friend, confessor, and counselor. He is a man of uncommon learning, affable and courteous, and of faultless clerical habits; and it is only when his counsel is directed by selfish interest that the storm clouds begin to gather. His selfish interest is one of ambition for his beloved nephew, an ambition constantly prodded by the nephew's adoring mother, and thus has its source in human love. That this serves as the motivation of the story Galdós himself confirms: "When seeing violent pass-

(1) DOÑA PERFECTA, N.Y., 1919, pp. 214-215.

ions in open or concealed conflict, we look for the hidden source; and exploring the hidden recesses of the hearts which beat in this story, we discover a cause that is assuredly the source of the most important events that we have narrated; a passion which is the first drop of water of the impetuous current whose course we are observing --. The love of Remedios for her son, Jacinto, was one of the strongest passions of which the maternal heart is capable. Her son's welfare was her first earthly consideration. ⁽¹⁾

Confident of his own skill in the use of subtle artifice, and making the most of his clerical influence with Doña Perfecta, Don Inocencio set out to remove the obstacle to his ambition, without the slightest intention however, of inciting to murder. His crime lay in the misuse of the power which his office gave him. It is by no means Galdós' aim to portray Don Inocencio as a type of the Spanish priesthood. He presents him merely as an individual. That there are others like him both in and out of the Catholic organization, however, goes without saying.

⁽²⁾
DOÑA PERFECTA, like Galdós' play ELECTRA, also seemingly anti-clerical in its thesis, and which caused such a

(1) Idem, p. 167.

(2) Madrid, 1920.

storm of criticisms, is primarily a study of the human conscience, of individual characters, and their reactions to their environment. Just as Don Inocencio is not meant to be typical of the clergy, so neither is Doña Perfecta meant to be the type of devout and pious mother. She is sincere in her belief that she is a good Christian. When she confesses to Pepe Rey that she has employed subterfuges, has in devious ways harrowed and tortured him in order to gain an end which she felt to be at the same time beneficial to him and to her daughter, she recognizes no wrong in her method, since it was actuated by good intention. "If you believed in God," she says to Pepe, "if you were a good Christian, you would not dare to form evil judgments about my conduct. I am a devout woman, I have a tranquil conscience. I know what I am doing and why I do it. - - - I desired to attain my object without scandal, without offending your father, or you, or giving cause for people to talk, by an explicit refusal. - --- In everything we must see the good intention."⁽¹⁾

The reading of DOÑA PERFECTA should leave, and does leave when read without prejudice, an impression of the inevitable tragedy of conflict between two stages of culture, when fanaticism blinds one to tolerant impulses and a sense of fairness. Thus it becomes evident that DOÑA PERFECTA

(1) DOÑA PERFECTA, p. 137.

is not, as often indicated, an attack on the church, and is not a propaganda novel as such. There is, however, a definite purpose in it: to combat bigotry. It is one of the social evils which claimed Galdós' attention in many of his novels; bigotry in religion, in politics, in opinion. This purpose is always evident, but because Galdós was a genius, his novels are primarily artistic, and whatever there is of a didactic tendency, is subordinated to the story.

The remarkable thing is that Galdós, enthusiastic and zealous as he was in exposing the evils resultant from bigotry and wilful ignorance, was so impartial and fair in the presentation of both sides of the question. It is evident, to be sure, that his sympathy is with the new, as represented by Pepe Rey, a scientist of elevated ideas, whose commanding appearance suggested intellect and strength. But he had a disposition that was not very malleable, and his frankness bordered on tactlessness. Although "temperate in conversation, he had the defect of employing, not always with moderation, the weapon of ridicule; which made him appear wanting in respect for a multitude of things commonly accepted and believed."⁽¹⁾ In spite of his superior intelligence he fails to remember that one cannot ridicule with impunity a town's religion,

(1) Idem., p. 22.

and his abstraction upon examining the interior of the cathedral, his failure to remove his hat and observe the usual customs, is interpreted by the townspeople as contempt of their religion.

Galdós presents the picture of the village of Orbajosa to his readers by means of interesting contrasts, introducing the element of irony which he so frequently uses in his novels. Pepe Rey, and other newcomers look upon it as a community arrogant in its self-sufficiency, filled with antiquated ideas respecting society and the state, hostile toward all strangers, distrustful, superstitious, envious, slanderous, and irritating, a community in which religion is carried to an extreme of offensive fanaticism. On the other hand, a native son describes Orbajosa: "We know few places where all the virtues, unchoked by the malefic weeds of vice, grow more luxuriantly. Here all is peace, mutual respect, Christian humility. Charity is practiced here as it was in Biblical times; here envy is unknown; here the criminal passions are unknown, and if you hear thieves and murderers spoken of, you may be sure that they are not the children of this noble soil; or that if they are, they belong to the number of unhappy creatures perverted by the teachings of demagogues. Here you will see the national character in all its purity --upright, noble, incorruptible, pure, simple, patriarchal, hospitable, generous."⁽¹⁾

(1) Idem,, p. 110.

Both views are highly prejudiced and the error lies in the generalization.

Religion, unfortunately is like many other things in that it is not always what it seems, and all too frequently one who appears most religious turns out to be most irreligious. The careful observance of narrow formulas, unless they penetrate to the heart, cannot make the Christian, and all too often results in ignorant fanaticism. It is this type of stubborn religiosity, whether practiced by the laity or clergy, whether Catholic or Protestant that Galdós deploras, as injurious to humanity, to society, and to the church itself. The irony in the last paragraph of this novel of "persons who seem, but are not good"⁽¹⁾ is manifest.

"Every day Doña Perfecta becomes more yellow. The poor mother finds consolation for her grief in religion and in devotional exercises, which each day she practices with a more exemplary and edifying piety. She passes almost the whole day in church, and spends her large income in "novenas" and in splendid religious ceremonies. Thanks to her, religious worship has recovered in Orbajosa its former splendor. This is some consolation in the midst of the decay and dissolution of our nationality."⁽²⁾

(1) Idem., p. 227.

(2) Ibid.,

In GLORIA, a novel in two volumes, Galdós introduces the religious conflict in a very different atmosphere. Here again is a tragedy of intolerance, but a tragedy which results from a conflict of ideas, a battle of consciences, far removed from the passions of hate and ambition which constitute the plot of DOÑA PERFECTA.

The heroine is Gloria Lantigua, daughter of a family of wealth and culture, and serene Catholic faith. It is the leading family of Ficóbriga, and is universally beloved for its virtues, and its charitable works; in particular, Gloria's uncle, the Bishop Don Angel, with his noble sentiments, gentle tolerance, and dogmatic faith. Out of filial deference to her adored father and uncle, Gloria suppresses her independence of thought and judgment, and arrests her budding liberal ideas concerning the freedom of man to profess that religion which his conscience and reason lead him to believe to be the true one, and the belief that eternal salvation can be found in any religion, --ideas which Don Angel condemns as latitudinarian. And so Gloria does what Galdós says nine-tenths of the Catholics do, that is, "conceal their heterodoxies in order not to grieve their elders. Thus it results that she is, like most people, orthodox before others, and latitudinarian to herself."⁽¹⁾

(1) GLORIA, Madrid, 1916, Vol. I, p. 249.

The hero is Daniel Morton, whose noble character, refined sensibility, and broad education command admiration. He is the son of a wealthy and illustrious Jewish family of Hamburg, Germany, rabbis of their race, and has been brought up with an intense love for his people and their faith.

Fate occasions the coming together of these two young people by means of a storm and ship-wreck, from which Daniel is rescued and placed in the Lantigua's home until he recovers from the exposure. Because of his attraction to Gloria and growing love for her, Daniel conceals his Hebrew ancestry and faith, hoping that love may in some way remove the wall between them.

It is the setting for a great conflict, similar to George Eliot's DANIEL DERONDA, and Galdós uses it to advantage, working out the sequences of plot with an interest and dramatic artistry which have caused it to be acclaimed one of his best novels. The problem involved, however, is one as much of race as of religion, and the sentiment expressed is in harmony with the development of the characters of the protagonists in their relations to each other and to society, rather than the expression of the author's own ideas. GLORIA is an artistic creation first of all, and the conflict in it is the inevitable result of differences in ideas and beliefs which races and traditions have imposed. As such it offers little

concrete material in determining its author's religious beliefs, but presents a splendid description of the religious state of Spanish society as he saw it. Like Orbajosa in DOÑA PERFECTA, Ficóbriga, the home of the Lantiguas, is a rural village with the characteristic small town egotism, superstitions, narrowness, bigotry, and hostility, -- traits characteristic not only of Catholic small towns, to be sure.

After a few weeks as a guest in the Lantiguas' home, where he is cordially liked and admired, Daniel realizes the impossibility of a happy conclusion to his and Gloria's love, and leaves. But Fate brings him back, and there, in another storm of the elements, as fierce as the one that first brought Daniel to Ficóbriga, the fast brewing storm of moral conflict bursts over them. Gloria, too late, learns that the wall between them is not only one of sectarianism, but of racial religion, and that Daniel is as sincere a believer in the faith of his people as she is in hers. The shock of the discovery of Gloria's disgrace, which seems to culminate in the fact that Daniel is a Jew, causes her father's death, and this, along with the struggle between her love for Daniel, and her horror of his race and religion, dictated by her conscience and traditional training, results in the utter breaking down of her spirit. Her rebellion gives way to submission, and she

accepts the authority and guidance of her uncle, resigning all hope of worldly happiness.

Gloria's aunt, Serafinita, the soul of rectitude, with the purest of consciences and mystic aspirations, to whom, because of her zealous pursuit of souls, Galdós gives the name of "Mephistopheles of Heaven,"⁽¹⁾ comes to live with Gloria, whose health becomes more and more shaken as the mental and emotional conflict is prolonged. Serafinita works with but one aim, -- that of carrying her niece off with her to a convent, where her soul might be purified by prayer, humility, and penitence. Gloria, like Electra in Galdós' widely known drama of that name, becomes the victim of the opposing influences of a contemplative and an active life. Serafinita argues that by such a sacrifice of self, and by prayer, Gloria can also save the soul of the heretic she has had the misfortune to love. It is this appeal to human love that at last effects the triumph of the good lady's ambition, after she has exhausted all her arguments on the excellencies of the ascetic life, because Gloria was not able to bring herself to a submission so complete, that it would include the renunciation also of her son. Now, what formerly seemed monstrous and useless, becomes beautiful and profitable to a sublime degree, and in a state of mystic delirium she accepts the sacrifice. Serafinita, aglow with evangelical joy ar-

ranges for their departure for the convent that same afternoon, fearful lest her victim might escape her. And Gloria, whose inexhaustible love fits her for ideal domestic life, is to be sacrificed, because of a traditional idea, to a convent.

Gloria's other uncle, Don Buenaventura, her father's younger brother, is a prosperous banker. His cheerful disposition, his practical and less rigorous conscience, impell him to seek a more humane solution. He summons Daniel to Ficóbriga and urges upon him a conversion to Catholicism on the general ground of honor, though the conversion be only feigned. Religion to Daniel, however, is not a matter of creed alone. Though imbued with the idea that his is the true one, containing every moral truth, he is too liberal-minded to fail to see the same fundamental moral precepts in other creeds. His intolerance then, becomes one of race. The form of his religion is his nationality. "For the Christian," he says, "religion is no more than religion; for us, besides religion, it is our race, it is a kind of moral ground on which we live, it is our language, it is also honor, which to us cannot exist without consistence, without constancy, in loving an august and venerable faith for which we are scorned."⁽¹⁾

(1) Idem, Vol. II, p. 123.

Christianity is not false or bad, in his opinion, but he hates it because he believes it cruel and useless.

Historical and social reasons, the memory of eighteen centuries of insults, scorn, vengeance, and exile for having killed "a philosopher" -- all these are for him powerful arguments against the abjuration of his beliefs for Christianity, the executioner of his people. Finally, torn between his religious and social duties, in a state of exalted fanaticism, and believing himself inspired by mystic intuition, he determines to go through with a pretense of conversion in order to marry Gloria, and bring her into the kingdom of what he has been taught to believe religious truth.

Daniel's mother, suspecting her son's intentions, comes to Fico'briga and endeavors to dissuade him from his purpose by showing him that his plans, although great in a certain sense, are the extravagance of a visionary, and are utterly lacking in common sense, because a Catholic girl imbued with Christian faith, and fascinated by the martyrdom of the crucified Christ, would not leave the religion of her fathers, a religion which speaks to the imagination, to the heart, and to the senses, for one that speaks only to the
(1)
reason.

(1) Idem,, Vol. II, p. 288.

Unable to convince him, she resorts to strategy, and with the aid of the self-important mayor, Don Juan Amarillo, whose assistance she has purchased, she dramatically interrupts Daniel's acceptance of Catholicism before the assembled Lantigua family. Their consternation, and bewilderment as to what course to take, are ended then by Gloria's announcement that she does not wish to marry, but will stand by her decision to enter the convent. The cruelty of separation from her own son makes it impossible for her to come between another mother and son. Besides, her love for Daniel allows her to read in his soul the insincerity of his conversion, and the very greatness of her own faith makes it impossible for her to permit it. Her training which made her look upon this life as insignificant compared to the truer life to come, makes Daniel's soul more important to her than all else.

That night in a delirium, Gloria leaves her bed and following the highway, goes to Villamores where her son is kept, and there finds Daniel in the act of buying the child from his nurse. When at last she finds herself alone with the two beings she loves most in the world, she yields to a contented lethargy, happy that in these few moments before death, she can talk to Daniel and tell him of her faith that he would be saved by her mediation, and that

they would meet in an eternal union in the world where men's differences could not enter. The horrible conflict of their souls could end only by a great sacrifice -- hers; but she is glad it is death rather than the convent, because, made to love humanly as she was, it would have been impossible for her to convert this human love into the mystic passion of Christian perfection.

Three years later Daniel dies as a result of madness brought on by a mania for seeking a new religion, -- the religion of the future, which he maintained he had found. "Did he find his ideal there," Galdós asks, "where someone was impatiently waiting for him, perhaps hating Paradise while he did not come? It is necessary to answer categorically 'yes', or forget that this book was written."⁽¹⁾

Separated by a fatality of birth, Gloria and Daniel become the victims of the history and philosophy of man, the traditional beliefs and ideas which society has made, and which in turn govern it. Both working together toward their salvation through the powerful urge of love, they are beset on every hand by the claims of their consciences, of education, and of society. The past governs the present very largely, and many of the be-

(1) Idem., Vol. II, p. 365.

liefs which are universal through tradition, even though unjust, still hold sway, while others although they have lost their original worth continue to exist as forms.

The hatred of the Jew, -- a traditional prejudice which is as unjust as it is useless, is convincingly combated in this extremely interesting novel, which is a monument to Galdós' own liberal spirit and artistic genius. The trivial incident of the beggar who, having accepted Daniel's liberal alms, returns them when he finds they were given him by a Jew, is forceful in the story it tells. Daniel, who because of the hostility of the townspeople has been unable to find lodging, asks him if there is no pity in his Christian religion, and the beggar offers him a piece of his crust of bread, -- his idea of charity, but refuses Daniel's plea for friendly conversation and consolation, for "something which is not discord in religion, nor accusations, for a fact for which I am not responsible."⁽¹⁾ Then Daniel asks him why he will not take his alms;

"Is it fear?"

"Horror"

"Why?"

"Because it must be so. Goodbye."⁽¹⁾

(1) Idem, Vol. II, pp. 98-99.

The same seemingly ineradicable prejudice is as strong in Caifas, the poor sexton, who had been so benefited by Daniel's generous charity, and who looked upon him as an angel of Heaven, when he finds himself in the struggle between gratitude and respect for his benefactor, and his inherited repugnance for the Jew.

And Gloria herself, who learned to love the man, turned at first in horror from the Jew, but her love surmounted that obstacle and she could again see the nobility of the man.

A discussion in the first volume on the state of religion in Spain suggests what might be Galdós own opinion on the subject. Daniel's observations are those of the foreigner who sees things in the larger scope which distance lends. They are a little harsh, but Don Juan, who represents conservative judgment in defense of his countrymen, confesses that there is much truth in them.

Daniel says that he knows of no country in which there is less religious faith and yet so much pretension of possessing it. The majority of the illustrious men are irreligious. The middle class with rare exceptions is indifferent. The cult is practiced, but more through habit, through respect to the public, to families, and to tradition, than through real faith. The causes commonly

looked upon as effecting the dissolution of Spain: philosophy, modern liberties, luxury, and materialism, which were coming in from abroad, were not producing the same results elsewhere. It was because Spain was afraid to come out of the shelter of her Catholicism for fear of contamination.⁽¹⁾

There can be no question that it is Galdós himself speaking when Daniel suggests as the remedy: "The open air, constant exposure to all kinds of winds and weather, and willingness to be carried and dragged by the forces which solicit it; to tear off its beggar's cloak or shroud, and expose itself to the salutary storms of the century. Spain is like an apprehensive patient covered with plasters, bandages, patches, thousands of coats and foolish precautions. Do away with all that and the sick body will recover its vigor."⁽²⁾

Don Juan deplures the disorders of his country but feels they are not irremediable. He expresses Galdós' belief in the regenerative powers of humanity. And who can be sure that it is not Galdós speaking when he continues: "In the midst of the torpidity and frivolity which is seen everywhere, the Catholic faith itself exists pure and entire, unharmed and uncorrupted by

(1) Idem,, Vol. I, pp. 174-178.

(2) Idem,, p. 879.

errors, and the faith must triumph, it must give the results of virtue, if not today, then tomorrow."⁽¹⁾

One is left with a certain sense of tragedy and depression at the close of the story GLORIA, in which is fought so valiantly a battle in which there can be no victory. In it noble hearts struggle and bleed. "The fearful strife existed, exists, and will continue to exist," Galdós says, "and before it ends many Glorias will succumb, offering themselves as victims in order to placate the formidable monster, which with half of its horrible paws touches history, and with the other half, philosophy; a monster which has no name, and if it did, it would be made up by joining the most beautiful of things, religion, to the most vile, which is discord."⁽²⁾

Yet in the very desperation of the struggle in this story there is something which suggests a hope of a solution and victory ahead. It is symbolized in the precious child Jesús, who born in the conflict, is "the most beautiful personification of humanity emancipated from religious antagonisms through the virtue of love."⁽³⁾

(1) Idem, p. 182.

(2) Idem, Vol. II, p. 361.

(3) Idem, p. 365.

The thesis treated in LA FAMILIA DE LEÓN ROCH, a novel in two volumes, is the same as that of DOÑA PERFECTA -- the conflict between two stages of culture, and it likewise aims to combat the undue influence of the spiritual advisor in the family. It again is the conflict between the old and the new; the old, as represented by María Egipciaca in her obstinate adherence to traditional beliefs, and suspicion of all things not contained in the accepted formulas, -- in other words, modern progressive thought as embodied in her husband León Roch. María, however, with her youth, and beauty, and sensuous nature seems more completely the victim of priestly influence than Doña Perfecta, because, given the same conditions of environment and character minus her confessor's guidance, she would have developed in a more liberally human manner.

León Roch, like Pepe Rey, is a wealthy scientist, a man of integrity, and lover of truth. But he differs radically from Pepe in the qualities of self-control, his belief in the right of individuals to self-guidance, and his patience with popular credulity. León does not ridicule others' excess of fervor in religious matters; on the contrary he "looked with respect upon some believers, and upon others almost with envy. He was not eager for conquest, nor did he desire to convert anyone. If

study had given him great enjoyment, it had also produced for him hours of bitterness and discouragement. He did not believe his state perfect but quite imperfect.⁽¹⁾ Consequently he had no desire to drag into a solitude of doubt those who were finding happiness in faith.

León's ideal of life was a tranquil and virtuous existence, filled with love and study, and he set out to realize this ideal. He hoped to find it in his marriage to María, in whom he thought he saw a veritable treasure of beauty, goodness, sincerity, and humility, a character yet unformed, but possessing the great fundamentals of genuine sentiments and moral uprightness. Thus unrestricted by set habits, he planned to form her character, modeling her after his own image in order to guarantee peace and happiness in their matrimony. "I shall build my life to my own taste, as the birds build following their instincts. I have made my plan with the cold reason of a practical man, genuinely practical."⁽²⁾

But with what enjoyment Fate seems to mock at man's practicality and reason, at the egotism which ignores the workings of those mysterious forces which help shape the destinies of man! María does not prove to have the em-

(1) LA FAMILIA DE LEÓN ROCH; Vol. I, p. 135.

(2) Idem,, p. 65.

bryonic character her husband believed, but one already well formed, rooted in a narrow routinism which is encouraged and directed by her spiritual adviser Padre Paoletti. With the indiscrimination of bigotry she overlooks León's very Christian qualities and sees only the fact that he is not an avowed Catholic, and torments herself with his reputation of atheist. Her aspiration to convert him, an aspiration which has more of egotism than of loving concern, becomes in time a kind of monomania which takes form in excessive devotions and a fanaticism which kills in her all honest feeling, compassion, charity, and duty. María's religious creed is as barren of real and profound sentiment as it is simple: "I believe all that I ought to believe, and practice the cult assiduously because it is the best way to keep faith alive and to keep false doctrines out of the mind."⁽¹⁾ With all of María's devotions and faith, there is nothing in her of the honest Christian for whom religion is the purest form of love, and León can neither admire nor respect her faith, much less accept it himself. Galdós summarizes María's character in the following manner: "Just as certain privileged beings personify in themselves the aristocracy of thought and of feeling, León's

(1) Idem, p. 151.

wife personified the credulous bourgeoisie." (1)

From the first, León manifested a considerate respect for his wife's conscience in religious matters, and allowed her full freedom in her devotions. However, when she carries them to an excess of fanatic mysticism which destroys their conjugal peace, he realizes that a secret force, less generous in its manner is behind her, crushing his attempts to realize his virtuous ideal of home life. This force is María's spiritual adviser, -- "minister of intrusion and of religious abuse," (2) as León terms him, -- and by his counsel he has insidiously taken her confidence from her husband, and left in its place only apathetic duty. León had not thought it necessary to be alarmed that his wife go to the confessional two or three times a year, but he finds that this also can have its abuse, "which consists in carrying spiritual guidance along tortuous paths by daily secret consultations, sustained on the one hand by the scruples of simplicity, and on the other by the imprudent curiosity of one who has no family." (3) Thus at the end of two years of marriage León and María were "two beings separated by an idea in the sphere of pure sentiments, and

(1) Idem, p. 53.

(2) Idem, Vol. II, p. 205.

(3) Idem, Vol. I, p. 154.

united by beauty in the turbulent world of physiology."⁽¹⁾

León makes every attempt to avoid the wrecking of their lives. To bridge the gulf fast widening between them, he offers compromises and sacrifices, but constantly meets with the uncompromising reply that he should accept her faith if he wished to talk to her. The piteous evolution in María's character to pretentious religiosity and artificial martyrdom, the cold uncongeniality of their home life, the constant disputing and recrimination motivated by the now radical discord in religious thinking drive León away, but not until he has made a last appeal to her love and received her answer that her God commanded her not to love him.⁽²⁾ León rents a house next to Suertebella, beautiful estate of the Marques of Fúcar, where he finds a certain consolation in the company of Monina, whom he idolizes because he sees in her something akin to the fulfilment of his own ideal. His love for the child soon includes the widowed mother Pepa Fúcar, who has loved León since their childhood together. The wilful, capricious Pepa of former days has been tempered by trials and suffering into a woman of fine sentiments and understanding.

(1) Idem,, p. 147.

(2) Idem,, pp. 339.

Meanwhile, María, although she has herself driven León from her, is conscious of a loneliness and restlessness engendered by a vague jealousy. Even though she has sacrificed him for her mysticism, she can not endure the thoughts of his belonging to another woman, and when she hears the tales of scandal concerning him and Pepa, invented by gossipers for their own entertainment, the whole cloak of her arid mysticism falls from her, and her woman's heart and soul rise victorious, demanding their rights. Jealousy, more powerful in her than love, arouses her to action and revenge. Putting aside her hair-cloth clothing and other signs of asceticism, she dresses with her former care and luxury, and goes to León to demand an account of his actions, -- and to win him back. But she has completely destroyed his love for her and the gulf between them has grown too wide to be bridged. Jealousy, humiliation, terror at her hasty desertion of her mystic faith, overwhelm the disappointed wife and working herself into a state of frenzy she tears off her finery and faints.

María's condition requires immediate medical attention, and so she is taken to the home of the Marquis. There, because of the seriousness of her condition, León takes every precaution to protect her from further nervous and emotional excitement, heroically pretending

a love he does not feel, yielding to her every whim, even to bringing her confessor there, whom he urges beforehand to remember that charity will do more than truth at that time. The interference of her officious and tactless family, however, results in a relapse, and she dies.

In spite of León's will to keep it out, the hope of a future of happiness opening before him is insistent in claiming a part of his thoughts, but it is almost immediately dashed by the information Pepa brings him concerning the discovery that her worthless and corrupt husband had not perished in an explosion on shipboard as they believed, and that he has returned home. Pepa had never loved him, but had married him in the hopelessness of despair when León married.

The final conflict for León is one of conscience and desire, a struggle between honor, justice and decorum on the one hand, and on the other his and Pepa's right to happiness and love. León is an admirable and strong character and the struggle through which he passes is intense, because his emotions are deeply stirred while his reason remains coldly clear. He has all the power of self-control which Galdós himself possessed and admired so much in others.

León had been eagerly pursuing a beautiful ideal --

the Christian family as a center of peace and virtue. Two women had crossed his path. The first gave him religion, but it, poorly interpreted, had taken her from him. The other gave him her heart, but society kept her from him. Law, religion, everything was on the side of Pepa's corrupt husband and against León, and to ignore the laws which society imposes would bring dishonor to himself and his posterity. "I cannot be", he says, "like the mob for whom there is neither divine nor human law; I cannot be like those who use prescribed morals for their public acts of life, and are vitiated within by mean thoughts and evil intentions."⁽¹⁾

León believes in the right of the individual to freedom of thought. He also believes in "the law of the heart." . . . "But," he says, "when I wish to carry my anarchy from my mind to reality, I tremble and despair. . . . He who cannot transform the world and uproot its errors should respect them. He who does not know where the boundary is between law and iniquity, should heed the law with the patience of a slave. He who, hearing in his soul the shouts and tumult of a rebellion which seems just, and yet does not know a better organization to put in the place of the one he is destroying, should

(1) Idem, Vol. II, p. 20

be silent, and suffer in silence." (1)

From the ruins of his fine ideals, however, León emerges noble and great in his grief. What did it matter to be beaten, alone, calumniated and unfairly judged by men, if there glowed within him "that beautiful light which conscience sheds when it is sure that it has done right." (2)

The compensation of a clear conscience is not all that León can see in life ahead. He reminds Pepa of the power which hope has in softening suffering and opening new vistas. "Hope has no limits. It is a sentiment which binds us to the unknown, and beckons to us from afar, enriching our lives and giving us strength to resist and go on." (3)

Galdós' sympathy is without doubt with León. He is a victim and a noble one. Driven into domestic exile by an inquisition of cruel and merciless fanaticism, he is further condemned by society's conventional moral laws for what is so unjustly called his atheism, when the true atheists, the hardened materialists are the ones who would so righteously judge him. "They are a thousand times atheists who measure the greatness of divine

(1) Idem, p. 366.

(2) Idem, p. 384.

(3) Idem, p. 374.

purpose by the meanness and impurity of their corrupt hearts!"⁽¹⁾

When León married María, he acquired a family of parasitical degenerate aristocrats who believe themselves good Christians because they profess with their lips a religion which shows no signs of having penetrated to their hearts. Their law is the law of appearances. They admit that as good Christians they fulfill their duties poorly and are a little careless, but "we are prudent, we are tactful and keep up appearances - - We remember that we are living in a country eminently religious - -. We remember that the lower classes need our example in order not to go astray."⁽²⁾ The father, the Marquis of Tellería, is a dissolute old wreck who is ever zealous to defend what he calls the family honor, while the mother's attentions are riveted on the vanities of the world. There are four children: the profligate young Leopoldo, Gustavo with his ostentatious righteousness and pride, María, and Luis, a Jesuit monk. The family is typical of the penniless second rate aristocracy who make use of every artifice, and endure dire misery in order to keep up appearances before the world, and to avoid the disgrace and trouble of doing honest work.

(1) Idem,, Vol. I, p. 372.

(2) Idem,, p. 110.

They borrow shamelessly from León, and when after nearly four years of patient indulgence, he refuses to lend more money to them because his generosity has proven to be only the protection of vice, and offers instead a small pension on which they could live modestly, the Marquis becomes infuriated, his pride and "honor" are insulted. His moral code was such that he could ask for loans that he did not intend to pay, but charity in the form of a pension, was degrading.

Luis Gonzaga, María's twin brother is the pride of the family. He is a mystic of the old order, feverishly idealistic, and sincere in his ascetic practices. He is honest in his desire to save his beloved sister's soul from the contamination of her husband's philosophical ideas, and to guide her along the road to perfection, but he, like María's confessor, is unfit to give counsel in a field unknown to him. They believe that they can duly respect the church's marriage sacrament, and at the same time gain another recruit to mysticism by a separation of the spiritual and physical life. María was to be interested in her husband's salvation, to be sure, but first in her own. Under such religion, León could see only egotism, and a lack of the real spirit of charity.

María's nature, however, is not of the stuff of which mystics are made, and the attempt to make her one,

results in the repression of her natural instincts which under prudent guidance might have flowered into real virtues, and produces a sort of automaton of bare religious formulas, wrecking her life and the lives of others. To quote the Marquis of Fúcar: "Religion is a virtue, but exaggerate it, and what results is the horror of horrors." (1)

María's life was a false one filled with error and separated from all rational well-being; but her error had its foundation in a thing fundamentally beautiful. The spiritual legacy left her by her brother, the Jesuit priest, took in her an entirely different course because of her different nature, even though the intent in her was no less virtuous. The mystic aspirations in Luis, whose nature was wholly free from sensuousness, took their purest form. His spirit longed to break loose from earthly chains, and although his constant meditation on death, his self-mortification and depreciation were antiquated, they were virtuous and honest. Galdós even feels toward this type of mystic a certain admiration which he expresses in his description of Luis: "Nevertheless, the very tendency of modern worship to be satisfied with good eating and physical comforts, made more admirable the abstinence and voluntary martyrdom of the Marquis'

(1) Idem,, p. 324.

son."⁽¹⁾ Galdós' creation of the mystic is remarkable and is the work purely of the imagination since Galdós was certainly not a mystic himself.

Very interesting is the chapter⁽²⁾ in which are contrasted the mystic's visions of the beauties of heaven and León's poetic interpretation of the stars. The one represents the ideal of dreams; the other the beauty in truth, a study both sublime and human. Clarín calls attention to the comparison. "Reader, compare the visions of Luis with León's study of the stars; I hope that your heart will admire the greatness of the Jesuit; but it will beat stronger before that melancholy and simple review of the stars which seems gnostic poetry, at the same time that it is a celestial eulogy. To look at the stars and recognize them as friends, to love them, without knowing why, and to experience a well-being in the midst of this great enigma of the universe, perhaps is more profoundly religious than to be mystic."⁽³⁾

To Galdós, religion has its foundation in the nature of man, and reaches its finest development in the individual when that development is in accord with natural instincts. In his reform movement it is one of his pur-

(1) Idem., p. 198.

(2) Idem., Chap. XXI.

(3) Clarín: Galdós in OBRAS COMPLETAS. Vol. I, p. 85.

poses to show that spiritual beauty and perfection may be attained along other ways than the old accepted one of asceticism, and that this, being so purely subjective in form, cannot serve universally, without disaster. It is a criminal usurpation of human and social rights when institutions with antiquated ideas selfishly drag the sacred sentiments of honest souls through labyrinths of false religion and stupid and false asceticism.

But if Galdós condemns one-sidedness and fanaticism in religion, he also satirizes the indifference and hypocrisy of those for whom religion is no more than a duty of superficial practices, a superstitious adoration of words, of form, and routine, while the soul remains cold and inactive without joys nor grief, without struggle nor victory, and sleeps on in the midst of devotions which are practised chiefly because of the hope or fear of the future life, or solely for social decorum.

As has been stated before, Galdós had a very definite purpose of combating intolerance and promoting modern progress. His reformer's spirit is strong, but is entirely subordinated to his art, because Galdós is first of all a novelist. The charge of a strongly anti-clerical attitude in his three novels discussed above, probably has its basis more in the fact that Galdós was

known to be avowedly opposed to the barren virtue of parts of the ecclesiastical organization, especially monastic orders rather than the treatment in the novels themselves. Havelock Ellis in a criticism of the drama ELECTRA quotes Galdós on the subject of anti-clericalism: "Galdós is fully able to sympathize with all that is best and freest in the mystical, religious temper of his countrymen. He has lately taken an opportunity of explaining his position. He is not opposed to the church, he tells us; on the contrary, he thinks the church should be preserved, but he wishes to check the growth of monasticism, which he believes, attained alarming dimensions during the past century, and to restrain the undue influence of the church on secular life. 'Do not touch the secular clergy!' he exclaims, and even among the monastic orders he is willing to uphold those which, like the Augustinians and the Carmelites, retain an atmosphere of poetry, reserving his indignation for those, more especially the Jesuits, who preach a barren ideal of gloomy virtue and whose 'diabolical inspiration' tends to dry up the fountains of life -- It is a studiously moderate program."⁽¹⁾

In DOÑA PERFECTA, LA FAMILIA DE LEÓN ROCH, and GLORIA, Galdós attacks religious fanaticism, just as he attacks

(1) Ellis, Havelock: "Electra, and the Progressive Movement in Spain," in THE CRITIC, Vol. 39, (1901) p. 215.

other forms of fanaticism in others of his novels. He is so far from showing bias that he allows each side to appear in its own favorable light, and there is rarely a character so bad but that he can find in him some good. In the throng of priests occupying both major and minor rôles in his works, there are as many of noble and sound character as there are of shallow or evil sentiments, and the number in which either appears is not extraordinary considering the large part the clergy has played in Spanish society.

In *DOÑA PERFECTA* and *LEÓN ROCH* the primary impression is that of an inevitable and tragic conflict between two stages of culture; in *GLORIA*, it is the conflict between the culture of two races. His remarkable realistic descriptions express the general "fermenting discontent with sacerdotal bigotry"⁽¹⁾ of his time. It was not a movement necessarily hostile to the Church, but one that demanded a purified and humanized Catholicism which should be in harmony with the claims of nature and of social progress.

(1) Ellis, Havelock: "The Spirit of Present Day Spain" in *THE ATLANTIC MONTHLY*, Vol. 98. (1906) p. 759.

MYSTICISM

ANGEL GUERRA

NAZARÍN

HALMA

If Galdós' first novels, in which he developed the religious thesis, presented a picture of the negative and harmful results of fanaticism, which seemed an attack on the Church, especially the clergy, and raised the charge of partisanship, in his later ones he reveals with equal force the positive and beneficent results of a tolerant and pure religious feeling. This desire to present impartially both sides of the question helps to make evident that the fault for the controversies, which some of Galdós' works occasioned, was not his. Neither was it the fault of the Catholic religion itself, but had its origin in the political attitude and the Spanish ecclesiastical state of mind during the reform movement which started with the Revolution of 1868.

ANGEL GUERRA, NAZARÍN, and HALMA are novels which treat of the positive side of religion and certain aspects of mysticism. In his studies of unusual or mystical types in which Galdós became steadily more interested, as his art developed and became more reflective, one finds the spiritual and intellectual element uppermost. Menéndez y Pelayo observes that with ANGEL GUERRA, Galdós enters "with noticeable elevation of thought, a world of spiritual and mystic ideas very different from the world

in which the action of GLORIA takes place." ⁽¹⁾ He recognizes the influence of Tolstoi in this new direction in Galdós' talent, but attributes the change largely to the "progressive though slow purification of his own religious thought, not disciplined very severely nor accustomed, because of his habits of concrete observation, to contemplate things sub specie aeternitatis, but always very far from that practical atheism, the plague of our society even in many who boast of their faith; from that mere relative form of thinking with which one lives continually apart from God, although he confess him with his lips, and for worldly reasons profanes His holy name." ⁽¹⁾

ANGEL GUERRA, one of Galdós' best novels, is one of those produced in the period of greater spiritual serenity, --his "reflective period," as termed by Menéndez y Pelayo, and therefore may be expected to furnish authentic material for analysis in an effort to find the soul of the author in that of his characters. But even as a reading of the biography of Galdós reveals him little inclined to talk of himself, so the reading of any or all of his novels reveals the same impersonal attitude, -- an impersonality which had its source in his nature and temperament rather than in a studied reserve, and resulted

(1) Ibid.

in his works being wholly objective. Galdós created many souls, -- the number runs into the thousands, -- but it is impossible to pick any one and say of it that he created it in his own image; on the other hand it is inevitable that in creating so many characters he should have drawn something from himself.

Angel Guerra, in the novel of that name, seems to have certain things in common with the ideas of his creator, and therefore a careful study of this three-volume novel may serve to throw some light on the end desired. It is a study of the relation between the soul and the temperament, and as in many others of Galdós' novels, shows the effect of imposing repressions arising from environment, education, or self-deception, on certain natural tendencies, which in moments of great stress may burst through the acquired veneer and undo the labor of years.

The novel treats of an exalted mystic psychology in which the protagonist changes, under the softening influence of religious surroundings, from an impulsive revolutionary to an outwardly model religious man. This outward change affects his inner life to a certain extent, but is unable to conquer some of his stronger natural impulses, because his sensitiveness to impressions

and his tendency to yield to his impulses make it impossible for him ever to become completely dominated by acquired habits, however sincere may be his will to change.

At the beginning of the story Angel Guerra, thirty-year-old widower, imbued with an instinctive humanitarianism and zeal for reform in the social, religious and political order, has reached a stage of disillusionment, as the result of the failure of a revolutionary uprising which turned out to be little more than a farce. From childhood he was impressed by the grief and injustice which seem the inseparable companions of humanity, and believed that they could and ought to be remedied. His mother, a wealthy widow, with a veritable passion for authority, has irreflexibly opposed his ideas of reform and tried to force him to accept her manner of thinking, with the usual result that opposition produces in strongly independent natures. Guerra's revolutionary activity, however, which was the outcome of "one of those feverish states at which we arrive by degrees, by a gradation of circumstances propitious to nervous disorder and fits of the will,"⁽¹⁾ is checked after its disillusioning and unprofitable clash with reality, and loses a great deal more of its force at the succeeding shock of his mother's

(1) ANGEL GUERRA, Vol. I, p. 246.

death, before any real conciliation is made between them. A further change is wrought through the inheritance of his mother's great wealth which awakens in him an economic sense, and a respect for the conventions of society against which he had formerly been so rebellious. His strong individualism is supplanted by a certain social sense and a recognition of good in formal conduct. Finally the illness of his idolized child, "Ción," makes him resort to an appeal to divine mercy. It is the first step in his spiritual development. The child dies, however, in spite of every effort to save her, and in his grief Guerra comes more and more under the spell of the child's mystic governess Leré, for whom he has felt a great attraction for some time. She is the only one who can calm his imperious and impetuous nature, and although he looks upon her religious faith as one of blind feeling without reason, and considers her devotion too extreme, he is irresistibly attracted by her simplicity and sincerity.

Leré undertakes the spiritual reform of Angel Guerra, which she initiates by recommending a careful practice of the virtues of patience, love and charity. Her candid simplicity and conviction in her exalted, ethereal humanitarianism fascinate him, and an instinctive inclination

toward her suggestions, and her personal attraction lead him to a kind of suggestive obedience, and he begins with what seems to his practical sense its best expression, --"helping the needy."

Leré resigns to go to Toledo and realize her dream of entering a convent, one of those orders which practise active charity, "the strictest, the most rigorous, one that demands the most work, the greatest sacrifice, and orders the most humility and penalties, one that takes us nearest to suffering and death."⁽¹⁾ Leré's religious bent is the result both of purely subjective reasons and the wretched circumstances of her childhood. Angel Guerra endeavors to persuade her to stay, and finally asks her to marry him, acknowledging his love for her; but she will neither admit nor understand any except divine love.

A few days after she leaves for Toledo, Angel Guerra follows her, drawn by the irresistible attraction of her mystic magnetism, and there in the beautiful old city, with its wealth of archeological and historical interests, its beautiful old Cathedral and churches, its atmosphere of art and romance, and the mystic influence of the woman he loves, Angel Guerra passes step by step

(1) Idem,, p. 234.

into a religious life. He first is charmed and soothed by the atmosphere of repose and dignity in the churches, then attracted through a certain artistic dilettantism, then by a kind of religious curiosity, and later is stimulated by a longing for spiritual life. His wanderings alone in the outskirts and more solitary parts of the city, in which he hopes to meet with *Léré*; and meditations on the past ages and on the mysteries of life, evolve in him such a longing for solitude and quiet, and aversion to people and the noise and bustle of modern life, that he moves to one of his farms just out of Toledo.

By now he admits a certain "provisional faith, a kind of 'we shall see', a 'perhaps' which already proved a sufficient stimulus to look with respect upon things which formerly made him laugh. Suddenly he recognized that in the world of our ideas there are unknown areas, not yet explored, which open to the best, inviting us to them; dark paths which suddenly become illuminated; Atlantics, which, when one least expects, lead to continents never before seen nor even dreamed of." ⁽¹⁾ Angel did not try to analyse his desire to taste the joys of religion; he merely accepted it as something good, and

(1) ANGEL GUERRA, Vol. II, p. 50.

began to notice the growth of fondness for things which formerly had seemed false to him, and in a way still did.

Guerra is allowed to call on Leré once a week at the "Sisterhood of Charity," where she is serving her novitiate. As time goes on he believes more and more that Leré's firm character is a miraculous resurrection of the past, of the great historical figures, founders, and conquerers. And in proportion as his hope of humanizing her and marrying her dwindles, the magnetism which her mystic divinity exercises over him grows more powerful. Her image never leaves him for a moment. "To live for truth and only for truth, to imitate Leré, and follow her, though at a distance, were his desire and his illusion."⁽¹⁾ And in order that his likeness to his model might be more perfect, he decided that his new life must not be one of contemplation only, but also of action. Guerra was primarily a man of action and he naturally carried his new religious ideas to that field, where they gradually took form in plans for the founding of a charitable order with the aim of alleviating human misery and practising works of mercy. He planned to found the institution exactly as Leré might direct, however, purely contemplative if she so desired, or philanthropic and humanitarian, with all the Catholic

(1) Idem,, p. 189.

character she wished to give to it. Thus, for her, he accepted Catholicism fully, but his reformer's spirit saw in the organization of the church, forms which, in his opinion, needed modification. He expresses what was undoubtedly Galdós' own idea in regard to the clergy, that it "needed a good going over just as excellent and long used machinery needs taking apart and cleaning from time to time."⁽¹⁾ But in spite of these scruples he was willing to accept Catholicism just as it was, for Leré's sake, because she was a fervent Catholic. And a growing self-satisfaction begins to take possession of Angel Guerra as he sees opening before him a great destiny though subordinated to another greater one, and he comes to despise more and more his past life.

As though to interrupt his peaceful progress along the path of virtue, he meets with the despised and dissolute brother of Dulcenombre Babel, sweetheart and illegal wife of his revolutionary days, and a dispute, which in spite of his new Christian desire to practise charity and love of his fellowmen, results in a sudden burst of uncontrolled temper and a free-for-all fight, in which he obeys "a blind instinct of vengeful destruction which had not found expression for some time, and therefore was stronger. His arrogant, proud, haughty nature surged in

(1) Idem, p. 224.

him again carrying before it as an impetuous hurricane the new ideas, making dust of the work of sentiment and reason in the last months."⁽¹⁾

Leré, who believes herself divinely commissioned to reform Angel Guerra, prescribes daily practice in self-control by sheer will power. Up to the present she has been interested in awakening in him an inclination toward a spiritual life, but now she recommends the observance of forms: prayer, mass, and the fulfilment of the sacraments of the church. She preaches humility and scorn of false and worldly pride.

In the gradual metamorphosis in his feelings toward religion, the practising of the cult spoke at first only to his eyes and ears, then to his emotions and reason. Prayer in an abstract manner did not come easily because of hundreds of profane thoughts and distractions. It is here that art serves such an important place in religion. By submerging his thought in the sensorial contemplation of an image or symbol he could keep off distractions. Then he aspired to more: metaphysical prayer and purely abstract meditation.

Guerra's idea of images and their adornment changes completely. The material luxury which enveloped the divine

(1) Idem, p. 235.

symbols come to be perfectly logical to him now, since it seems altogether fitting to use for the exaltation and splendor of such symbols, all that is good and fine and choice in nature. It is rational to adorn them with lights, jewels, and precious metals, as material signs of human respect. Angel Guerra preferred the image of the Holy Virgin, the symbol of beauty, kindness and charity, perhaps because her image was so mingled and confused in his heart with that of Leré, who was the stimulus of all his acts. His idealization of Leré goes to the extreme that he even thinks her nun's dress elegant.

Leré finds in Guerra's determination to found a spiritual and charitable institution with her at its head, the opportunity to take the last great step in his conversion and she accepts on condition that he enter the priesthood.

A new era begins in Angel Guerra's existence. To prepare himself for the ecclesiastical life, he chooses for his spiritual guide Don Juan Casado, a priest who appeals to him because of his learning not only in books but in human science as well, because of his tolerant intelligence and his charming affability, and because he is wholly disinterested in, and independent of, any of the powerful religious orders, which, in Guerra's opinion, aspire to absorb the individual. He comes to have a certain admiration for the Jesuits, but does not wish to

join them. He wishes to preserve his individuality and initiative, because it is "an integrant part of the resolution I have taken."⁽¹⁾

Angel Guerra finds infinite pleasure in examining theoretically and practically the inexhaustible choral wealth of the Church, but he is not certain whether it is religious or artistic feeling which awakens in his soul such great and pure enthusiasm. He also spends a great deal of time in reading and meditation, and in his spiritual absorption neglects his physical needs of food and sleep, so that he is disturbed by certain nervous hallucinations. His faculty of materializing his ideas whenever his mind is disturbed and subjected by a tenacious thought, comes into play now, and he believes he actually sees himself transformed and wearing the priest's robes.

The next great disturbance in Angel Guerra's progress toward spiritual life comes in the form of a temptation which offers to possess Leré, in which he realizes that what he believed to be fraternal and angelical or mystic love for her was only an illusion, and that his love was after all little more than earthly passion. He says, "If in that moment I could have had what I desired, I should have accepted it in exchange for eternal blessed-

(1) Idem, Vol. III, p. 30.

ness without hesitating; an eternity of torment would make no difference to me in exchange for - - -." ⁽¹⁾ He spends many bitter hours afterwards in cruel doubts of himself, for he realizes that it was not the purity of religious feeling which had come to his rescue, but the sentiments of honor and dignity, and scorn of himself rather than fear of God. "There is within me an evil root which at times seems dead, but is as alive as I am, and when I least expect, sends out shoots which entwine my soul and smother it, poison it." ⁽²⁾ He feels unworthy to become a priest, but more than before longs for the contemplative life. That idea had become so fixed that it would be difficult for him to renounce it. His past interests, the outside world, no longer attracted him, and furthermore he had taken a great liking to the Catholic ritual, the religious ceremonies and music, and especially the mass, which symbolized to him "all love, charity and beauty." ⁽³⁾

His wise and tolerant counselor, the priest Casado, urges him to seek self-conquest and consolation in prayer and in the assurance that there is always pardon for real repentance.

(1) Idem, p. 119.

(2) Idem, p. 97.

(3) Idem, p. 121.

Life takes on new interest for Angel Guerra in his plans for the founding of his institution. He feels strong against temptation now and is eager to enter the priesthood which has come to seem to him the most beautiful and perfect state. His repugnance for his old life grows, and he would prefer death to returning to it and his former ideas. His mystic exaltation lights in his heart an extravagant love for humanity, inspiring in him ardent desires to remedy all unhappiness, to persecute evil, and scatter prosperity and happiness among all classes of people. His plans for the "Domus Dominis," his religious foundation, vary rather radically from the established custom, principally in that the nuns and monks are to work together and be housed in opposite wings of the same building. He is opposed to isolation. The doors of the institution are to be open to all who need spiritual or human help. The laws of charity and mercy as taught by Christ are to be practised literally. In it he wishes to renew the profoundly evangelical character of the ancient orders, and to form it in the mould of contemporary life. Leré, however, rejects the parts of the plan which introduce extreme innovations, on the grounds that a reform, to be successful, must make an unpretentious start in order not to arouse opposition and suspicion, and then must grow gradually,

Angel Guerra's enthusiasm grows steadily and his plans develop until they embrace the universe and the whole future. As an exalted visionary he dreams of the world as a kind of Utopia which his "Domus Dominis" is eventually to effect thru a complete reform of society and the church. With all his mysticism and religious vocation, Angel Guerra has not ceased to be as revolutionary as he was before coming to Toledo. "However modified one may become externally, in his enthusiasm and exaltation over the Catholic symbolism and the beauties of Christianity, behind all these refinements remains the natural temperament, always the same,"⁽¹⁾ says the wise Casado. And with these words he expresses the belief which Galdós makes the nucleus of his novel.

And so Angel Guerra's nature remains unchanged, in spite of his new interests and his sincere desire to follow a system of conduct of literal interpretation of Christ's doctrine. He is the same man he was in his revolutionary days with only his ideas changed and his activities turned in a new direction. He remains the man of action even though the contemplative life allures him; he remains a man of strong, arrogant, and bellicose impulses, though they are subjected by his will to be humble and charitable. His life is a verification of one

(1) Idem, , p. 315.

of his own statements, made at the initiation of his reform. "It is certain that we are not masters of ourselves, except in a very limited sphere; we are the result of forces that pull us from here and there. Character and temperament exist; but will is the projection of environment on our natures, and conduct is a systematic order, a progression in the direction which other orbits trace for us."⁽¹⁾

Once more Angel Guerra's impulses master him in a moment of stress. The traitorous Babeles brothers, whom he had charitably befriended, enter his room one night to rob him of a large sum of money, and in spite of Guerra's conscientious effort to maintain the seraphic character of his "dominismo," and to offer himself defenseless to their insults and thievery, his indignant rage overcomes him and he defends himself. In the struggle he is mortally wounded in the side by a razor.

On his deathbed the light of reason returns and reveals to Angel Guerra the truth of his life. He understands that death is the only possible solution to it, the only logical end for the peace of his soul. Death comes to destroy his chimera of "dominismo" and his dream of the ecclesiastical life, and he recognizes at

(1) Idem,, Vol. I,, p. 225.

last that these were not aims in themselves, but were founded on his love for Leré, and were his solution of a way to be near her. "I declare," he says, "that the only relationship which in the reality of my being could fully satisfy me, is not the mystic, but the human, sanctified by marriage; and this not being possible, I banish the mirage of my religious vocation, and accept death as the only solution, since there is, and can be, no other."⁽¹⁾

From his dream of "dominismo", however, has remained something which is worth more than life itself, -- love. "If it was initiated as an exclusive and personal feeling, it was extended afterwards to all of humanity, to every needy being; that is enough for me. I do not leave as a prodigal son who has dissipated his patrimony, for if I wasted some treasures I learned how to earn others no less great."⁽²⁾

In ANGEL GUERRA Galdós gives a powerful argument for the doctrine of love. Of all the passions, none so reaches out toward the infinite. Love both symbolizes and arouses a thirst for the infinite, and is humanity's primary need. There is something mystic and transcendental in its power which causes it to bestow a deeper insight and to reveal things as they really are amidst their

(1) Idem,, Vol. III, p. 370.

(2) Idem,, p. 271.

imperfections. Although artificial in much of his religion, Angel Guerra comes to realize in the end that the attainment of his initial aim, Leré's love, is insignificant in comparison with the gain which the spiritual discipline of love has conferred upon his soul.

The novel ANGEL GUERRA contains the greatest number of characters in the ecclesiastical rôle of any in Galdós' productions. They are splendidly human types, each possessing his weaknesses and his virtues, and each being as different from the other as one human being is from another. There is for instance, the angelical Don Tomé, pure-hearted chaplain of a convent church, who knew not the meaning of temptation, and whose ideas of life were formed from the experiences of others; the avaricious and "practical" Don Francisco Mancebo, who complains constantly of hard times and laments the fact that his talents as an administrator cannot have the opportunity to function in the care of property as well as of souls; the priest Virones, who is entirely out of his element in a field to which he has been lured by his fondness for Latin; then there is the admirable Don Juan Casado with his inordinate love of bucolic pleasures, whose charming affability, splendid tolerance and intelligent appreciation of human life, make him worthy of the office he holds. He is a direct antithesis of Luis Gonzaga or the priest Paoletti in

LA FAMILIA DE LEÓN ROCH,⁽¹⁾ who believe that religious perfection can be attained only through mystic approach. To Casado, it is the duty of each individual to cultivate godliness according to the conditions of his own nature. In the spiritual kingdom there may also be found "mammals, birds, and mollusks - - - and I sustain that the horse ought not try to fly, nor should the birds lead the life of oysters."⁽²⁾ He also recognized divine direction in the lives of individuals: "I shall not meddle with the destiny of any one," he says. "Let each one follow his instincts, since instincts are usually lines or courses traced by a divine finger, and no one, however much he knows, knows more than Destiny."⁽³⁾ Casado voices Galdós' own ideas in the above lines.

Clarín judges ANGEL GUERRA as one of the most careful in character study in Galdós' production, -- both as regards its protagonist and its secondary characters. Of the clergy he says: "But also much praise is deserved by the clergymen of the cathedral and parrish, who walk in the Toledo of Pérez Galdós with the same life and force of reality as the priests and canons of Balzac in Tours, and those of Zola in Plassanss. Fernando Fabre in France and Eça de Queiros in Portugal have given us an

(1) Vide Supra, 53.

(2) ANGEL GUERRA, Vol. III, p. 113.

(3) Idem., p. 151.

abundant, picturesque, and well studied collection of clerical types; but it may be said that Galdós, in ANGEL GUERRA, equals them in many ways and perhaps surpasses them in truth, in impartiality, and in the shad-⁽¹⁾ings of good and bad which may be seen in that class."

There are many digressions, descriptions, and remarkable character creations in ANGEL GUERRA. All however, are logical and serve to explain the psychology of the protagonist. The books are filled with vivid details of everyday life in Toledo. No anti-Catholic could have written with such understanding appreciation of the impressiveness and beauties of the Catholic ritual and of its inspiring hymnal, or described with as sincere reverence the repose and charm of its convent-churches, and the mystic dimness and wealth of art of the Cathedral of Toledo, as Galdós has written in ANGEL GUERRA. "While Tolstoy is completely heterodox and rejects the official forms of religion, Galdós, in his tempered and disillusioned rationalism sees the need, the beauty, the convenience of the eternal and universal hierarchy of the Catholic Church."⁽²⁾

(1) Clarín: Op. cit. pp. 249-250.

(2) Pardo Bazán, Emilia: POLEMICOS Y ESTUDIOS LITERARIOS, Madrid, N.D., p. 183.

Leré, the inspiration and guide of Angel Guerra is a mystic type, more mechanical than life-like. Her spiritual outreaching, her utter abrogation of earthly claims, her courage, humility and serene spirit are marks of mystic perfection; yet her prosaic temperament, lacking in real sentiment produces the effect of a cold ideal. There is little human understanding in her, and her longing to convert Angel Guerra smacks more of mystic egotism than spiritual charity. And Angel Guerra, in spite of all his mystic aspiration, remained the practical, the rational man of action, whose conversion to faith had its source in human love.

It is the same element of egotism, though less tempered than in the case of Leré, that motivated Serafinita, (1) Pantoja, (2) and Luis Gonzaga (3) in their zealous pursuit of recruits to mysticism. And it is this type of aggressive mysticism, which though it lacks all traces of perversness, also lacks the softening tones of human love and charity, that Galdós has depicted in his novels as harmful. But in order to judge its exponents and condemn them it would be necessary, as he says of Serafinita, "that God add to his Decalog an eleventh article which read: 'Thou shalt not

(1) GLORIA

(2) ELECTRA

(3) LA FAMILIA DE LEÓN ROCH.

interpret falsely love of me.'

And in order that men might judge and condemn her there would be need to cast from the altars many men and women who ascended there by being like Serafinita -- . What a great pity that that piety was not more human!" (1)

It remained to Galdós to create a character which would embody his ideal of mystic virtues permeated by the warmth and beauty of love and charity. This he does in NAZARÍN.

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Nazarín, protagonist of the novel by that name, is a medieval figure in a late XIX century setting. With a longing to identify himself with Christ, he sets out to live according to the example of his great ideal, and to disseminate His teachings. He is an orthodox Catholic priest of thirty-odd years but prematurely aged, markedly Semitic in type, and of such pure faith, goodness, and simple habits that many believe him a saint, while others hold him to be a simpleton. He does not preach from the pulpit, but helps and teaches those who seek him, and his only income is made up of the fees he receives from the few masses he is called upon to say. He is a personification of the Christian ideals of charity, humility,

(1) GLORIA, Vol. II, p. 220.

conformity, poverty and chastity.

The action begins one night while Nazarín is alone in his humble dwelling. A woman, one of society's dregs by the name of Ándara, begs for admittance and shelter from the police who are pursuing her because of her part in a murderous dispute. She herself is wounded. Nazarín dresses her wounds as best he can, then he concerns himself with the condition of her soul. All goes well until a few days later when Ándara's presence is betrayed by the cheap perfume which saturates her clothing; and she, fearing that her discovery might compromise her benefactor, removes all traces of herself by pouring oil over her bedding, setting fire to it, and leaving. The fire, however, spreads to the rest of the house and completely destroys it.

Nazarín is given shelter in the home of another priest, and a few days later is summoned to court where he testifies simply and in detail, telling the whole truth, not because of his honor as a priest but because of his joy in doing so, not caring that others may misinterpret his charitable action as the harboring of a criminal, with the added appearance of scandal. The priest's hospitality is withdrawn, and Nazarín goes to the home of some poor friends who receive him kindly. Calamities accumulate rapidly, as if God meant to put his disciple to a supreme

test. His meager income stops, for now he is not invited to say mass in any parish, and his fellow priests look upon him with disdainful pity. He also receives the information that his priest's license is to be taken from him and he will be summoned by Episcopal authority for correction.

Nazarín, somewhat depressed in spirit, seeks the solitude of nature in the early mornings, and there comes to feel that God is commanding him to abandon all human interests, to break with everything called civilization. Unable to resist the inherent longing to live in nature away from the corruption of cities, and feeling that only thus can he arrive at all the purity possible in human existence, realize eternal blessings, and practise charity as he understands it, he lays aside his priest's robe, and barefoot like his great teacher, starts on his pilgrimage.

Nazarín's submissive and obedient nature arrives at this form of rebellion because his conscience orders it, because he hears the voice of God commanding him. ⁽¹⁾ The rebellion, however, is one of form since it consists only in evading the reprimand of his superior and the procedure of a justice which is not always justice. He is not

(1) NAZARÍN, Madrid, 1907, p. 101.

fleeing from penalties or discomfort, or poverty; but he is going in search of them. He believes himself within the bonds of purest orthodoxy, and he reverses all the commands of the church. That he prefers liberty to the life of the cloister is because in free penance he sees more hardship, more work, and humiliation. He scorns public opinion, and with quixotic ardor challenges hunger and nakedness, insults and martyrdom. "He was fleeing from the world and from a life which was incompatible with his spirit, enveloped, if it may be described thus, in the dream of an ascetic and penitent life."⁽¹⁾

Before he goes very far, he meets Ándara who insists upon accompanying him in spite of his objection. People are kind to them as a rule, giving them the necessary food and shelter. A few days later they are joined by Beatriz, a friend of Ándara's. She is of much finer clay, and Nazarín's holiness ignites a mystic fire in her spirit. Both women look upon Nazarín as a saint and divine teacher.

Except for minor incidents their course runs too smooth for this intrepid ascetic who longs to meet with trials and sufferings. Finally they hear of a small-pox epidemic in a near-by town and hasten to it. There they

(1) Idem,, p. 102.

work tirelessly and heroically to alleviate the suffering, giving words of consolation, washing and feeding, or burying the small-pox victims, until aid is sent from Madrid. Then they go to a neighboring town in which the same epidemic is raging, and work bravely, regardless of danger to themselves. They are looked upon by the villagers as "angels descended from Heaven."⁽¹⁾ When help comes from Madrid they leave, worn out but happy because of the service they have rendered. Coming to the ruins of a castle, Nazarín calls a halt, and orders a rest of a few days in order to repair their strength for other and more terrible campaigns.

The night before they are ready to be upon their way again, they are dramatically arrested for vagrancy by the sheriff and a crowd of followers from the near-by village, and taken to the town jail, thence to Madrid. On the way Nazarín becomes ill, and on his arrival is placed in a hospital awaiting trial. The guards, who take a great liking to their prisoner and feel a certain pity for him, try to offer him consolation in the following words: "Don't worry, Father, there in Madrid they will absolve you on the grounds of insanity. Two-thirds of the prisoners who pass through our hands escape punishment, even

(1) Idem., p. 196.

if they deserve it, because of insanity. And even supposing that you are a saint, they won't let you go for that reason, but for insanity."⁽¹⁾ The story ends with a vision which Nazarín has. In it he sees Christ, who manifests his approval of his apostle's conduct and gives him hopes and consolation. A sequel is suggested.

One of the supreme tests of Nazarín's character came during his first night in the town jail. The jibes and insults of his fellow prisoners who finally go to the length of physical assault, awaken in him something akin to anger, but he conquers himself and instead of retaliating in kind, pardons them: "It is not easy to be a lion; but it is more difficult to be a lamb, which I am - - -. I look upon you as dear brothers, and the pain which I feel because of your wickedness, because of the danger of eternal condemnation in which I see you, is so great, and suffering and love inspire me to such a degree, that if I could, even at the cost of my life, I would obtain now your repentance, I would suffer joyfully the most horrible martyrdom, insults and death."⁽²⁾ By his sincerity he wins the grudging admiration of most of the men, and the undying devotion of one of the prisoners known as "el Sacrílego."

(1) Idem, ,p. 302.

(2) Idem, .pp. 270-271.

The two women disciples whom Nazarín has attracted to him by his saintliness, Beatriz and Ándara, are types which reflect the two opposite tendencies in religion: the former, humility, forbearance, trust and patience; the latter, belligerent aggressiveness. This is most strikingly shown in the attitudes of the women upon the arrest of Nazarín. Ándara cannot control her anger at the injustice of it and insists that their hands and mouths were given them to defend themselves. (1)

"NAZARÍN is one of Galdós' most original works. In it are artistically confounded the realness of the characters and their ideal or symbolical signification. Nazarín is the Don Quijote of mysticism; not ridiculous, as neither is the Manchegan gentleman, in whom are found all the virtues of the ideal type of knight-errant, in spite of his bad fortune, but who, like the former, does not fit in the society in which he lives." (2)

In the first chapter of the novel Nazarín's character is well defined. Christ-like by nature, he has the mystic's disdain of worldly ambition, and scorns human knowledge. "When one has been able to add to intuitive ideas," he says, "a few other ideas learned in association

(1) Idem., p. 240.

(2) Andrenio (Gómez de Baquero): NOVELAS Y NOVELISTAS, Madrid, 1918, p. 69.

with men, and in the observation of society and nature, there is no need to seek in books more learning, and new ideas which confuse and confound those which one already has." ⁽¹⁾ His prediction that books and magazines will in time become so numerous that libraries cannot hold them, and that their only value will consist in their being chemically treated and used to fertilize the fields, likewise shows the mystic's reaction against worldly learning and science. There is also in him the conviction that the present is more corrupt than the past, that in proportion as culture and progress have advanced and wealth increased, poverty and misery have become more lamentable. This is because the mystic, unconcerned with history and statistics, sees the past principally with the eyes of imagination and clothes it with the beauty that distance lends.

In Nazarín's mysticism there dominates, however, the beautiful ideal of charity. There is not that selfishness and egotism which characterizes the spiritual outreaching of Luis Gonzaga. ⁽²⁾ A charity which made him tolerant; and although he fled from the worldliness of the cities, he did not try to effect a complete self-withdrawal. He

(1) NAZARÍN, p. 30.

(2) LA FAMILIA DE LEON RÓCH.

mingled instead with the poor and lowly, alleviating their sufferings wherever possible, consoling them and giving wise counsel whenever it was sought. To these poor he was a saint. They loved him and could appreciate the greatness of his spirit because they are more truly children of nature, and their intuitions are not cramped by reason, which at best has given only a very imperfect understanding of the things of the soul, and makes it difficult to distinguish between madness and godliness. (1)

Mysticism in Nazarin is a natural development rather than the result of reform through intellectual conviction. All the primary virtues of the Christian ideal: humility, conformity, poverty, and chastity are synthesized in him. His humility is born of his admiration and awe before the grandeur of God's works. "All creation has existed for countless ages and will go on existing many more after we die, so that we live only an instant in its time. Behold the heavens and see how poor is this earth on which we live, - -." (2) His conformity in all things is absolute, and he endures trials, sufferings, insults and persecutions without complaint. He is a model of patience and obedience. To him poverty is a passion no less necessary

(1) HALMA, Madrid, 1913, p. 158.

(2) NAZARIN, p. 187.

to spiritual growth than humility and conformity. It is his supreme aspiration. "Thus as others are happy dreaming of acquiring riches, my happiness consists in dreaming of poverty, finding enjoyment in thinking of it, and when I find myself in a bad state, in imagining one worse. This ambition is never satisfied because the more one has the more he wants, and in my case, the less I have the less I want."⁽¹⁾ Nazarin did not look upon chastity as a religious prohibition. His desires and aspirations of the spirit completely supplanted his interest in earthly life.

However noble these specific virtues are in themselves they need the warmth of love to give them value and beauty, and to protect them from the snares of egotism and fanaticism, -- love, which is the "desire of the soul to become one with all it perceives akin to itself." Nazarin says: "I do not know whether you feel love for God; but without love for one's fellow creatures, that great love is impossible, since the love plant has its roots in our soil, roots which are affection for our fellow beings, and if these roots are dry, how are we to expect flowers and fruits above."⁽²⁾

(1) Idem., p. 23.

(2) Idem., p. 157.

The criticism which the reporter makes of Nazarin in the first part of the novel,⁽¹⁾ and the attitude of the sheriff in his talk with Nazarin while the latter is a prisoner in the town jail,⁽²⁾ are representative of the modern viewpoint in regard to the literal interpretation and application of Christ's doctrines. The introduction of ideals and habits of antiquity into the progressive practicality of the XIX century is a kind of fanaticism which moderns excuse, if they do not condemn, as a form of insanity. They say that those who take the vow of poverty and live on charity are merely solving the problem of living without working. They are social parasites, and society, in the rôle of guardian, must consider these types, economically and politically as corrupters of humanity, and place them in beneficent asylums. The sheriff says, "Man's purpose is to live. One cannot live without eating. One does not eat without working - π . The XIX century doesn't want convents, but great economists. Mysticism cannot exist in this atmosphere."⁽³⁾

Does Nazarin's ideal to save the world by example bear fruit? He converts three persons of the lowest

(1) Idem,, p. 157.

(2) Idem,, pp. 38-40.

(3) Idem,, p. 245.

social state, and alleviates some physical suffering; then he is arrested for vagrancy and pitied as insane, or condemned as a charlatan. These results, however, cannot lessen the beauty and sublimity of mysticism itself. They merely show the impossibility of practicing the religious life in its simplicity and purity in the modern social organization. The religious instinct if fully followed out, must be content with the utter abrogation of society, and not aim toward its reform. The fallacy lies in the attempt to extend mysticism as a collective ideal to society, and to try to replace worldly ideals by spiritual ones. Each in their own sphere are dignified and beautiful. Life in the world is a struggle and must be recognized as such. To assume as a universal law what was meant to be the rule of an elect few, -- one of the most obvious examples of which is the ideal of taking no thought for the morrow, based on the beautiful parable of the lilies of the field, is the mischievous error which results from the common failure to observe distinctions.

In NAZARÍN Galdós treats this aspect of the religious problem very skillfully, and with fine impartiality gives to each side its due. However, the author is apparently not as interested in the relative values of in-

dividual and social religion, as he is in the psychology and growth of the protagonist himself, -- one of his most artistic creations; and the incongruities, which result in the contact of this medieval figure with modernity, serve to emphasize the beauty of his spirit. He represents Galdós' ideal of the highest and purest type of Christian character.

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The story of Nazarín is resumed in a sequel entitled HALMA. The story concerns Doña Catalina, Countess of Halma, still a young woman, who after suffering terrible privation and humiliations, followed by the loss of her adored husband whom she had married against her family's wishes, returns to her ancestral home. There, submerged in her grief and misunderstood by her brothers and sisters, she withdraws more and more to herself, and ends by detesting social life and the artificialities of civilization about her. Preoccupied now with things spiritual, her faith takes expression in the ambition to consecrate her life to the welfare of her kind. Influenced by her friend and confessor, Don Manuel Flórez, she aspires to a mystic spiritual life of contemplation and of charitable practices.

Her plan is to found a home for the needy, sick, and

aged, on her estate of Pedralba where she intends to live quietly and on equal terms with her protégés, realizing a form of family life. She receives permission from the ecclesiastical authorities to take under her care, Nazarín, whom the civil courts have discharged on the ground of insanity or "pietistic mania," noting that his acts, instead of instigating crime, were inoffensive, having besides a noble and Christian aim; and have given him over to the Church to be cared for and cured in some religious asylum.

Halma's idea of charity consists essentially in "giving what one has to one who possesses nothing, whoever he may be, and however he may use it ----. The important thing is the effusion in one's soul, the religious emotion one feels upon giving what he has and which is asked by another."⁽¹⁾ Like Angel Guerra she is opposed to organized charity, and wishes to follow her own initiative. Her first act is the redemption of her cousin, Don José Antonio de Urrea, with whom she had spent a part of her childhood and whom she knew to be good at heart and to have fine instincts, though they had become corrupted through orphanage and shameful misery. Urrea is considered by others a good-for-nothing, a "social parasite", and she is the only one who attributes his conduct to the

(1) HALMA, Madrid, 1913, p. 100.

inexorable despotism of necessity, instead of to a moral perversion, and believes the surest way to reform is not by preaching but by removing the dire necessities of body and soul, persecution by creditors, a life full of humiliations and hidden shame. Accordingly, she begins by lodging him decently, pays his debts and gives him the means to carry on the work he wants to do to earn an honorable living.

Urrea's original intention of mercenary exploitation of his cousin changes immediately to a feeling of gratitude, and ere long to love, which the disparity in their positions forces him to keep concealed. However, when she leaves Madrid to live in Pedralba, he follows a few days later, and finally obtains her consent to his remaining as one of her protégés. But his presence there soon gives rise to scandal, and Halma finds the security of her little Utopia menaced, unless she sends him away. She scorns the slander, but fears that if she loses public good-will the ecclesiastical authorities will withdraw their protection, the civil authorities will look askance at her foundation, and it will eventually perish. She recognizes in the slander the interference of her family and others who can see only the malicious and gross side of life. She pities them because they do not

know that "evil does not always prevail in the soul, and that a corrupted conscience can be purified. They have no faith; they speak a great deal of God, they admire his works in Nature, but do not know how to admire them or understand them in the human conscience. They are not bad, but neither are they good; they live on that semi-moral level to which belong all the vulgarity and all the insipidity of our present society."⁽¹⁾

Halma now discovers the sad truth that one cannot live unmolested even outside of social organization. She had hoped that her little community, isolated, obscure, and poor, would not cause envy; but now human ambition approaches and attacks it. Sanchos, eager to govern it, appear from everywhere. The Church, Science, and Agriculture, represented by the priest of the nearest town, the doctor, and a neighbor, dispute the office, and the countess, almost in despair, turns to Nazarín for counsel. And he, always the apostle of truth, whatever its cost, and of tolerance, gives the solution.

Nazarín, first points out the mistake of seeking to give to Pedralba a public organization similar to that of other religious and charitable institutions. Its service to God and to unfortunate humanity can be done

(1) Idem., p. 315.

better by its being established in a form of absolute liberty so that neither the church, nor the state, nor her family can interfere nor ask account of her actions. Then he makes her realize that her eagerness for the mystic life is only in her imagination, and that this is not enough. He advises her to cease aspiring to holiness along the path of renunciation of human affection and consecration of self to the pure love of things divine, a path to which she had been guided by her confessor Don Manuel Flórez, a good man, but one who lived in a rut, who followed beaten paths, and failed to understand the human make-up, and the peculiar character of each soul. The countess is not by nature suited to the solitary ascetic life, consecrated to meditation and abstinence. She needs activity, duties, affections, in short human life, and in it she can arrive, if not to perfection because perfection is denied us, to the height of being a blessing to her Creator and to humanity. She would attain little or nothing by following the purely spiritual path; everything by treading the human. "There is no reason to scorn human living, madam, because we should be despising the work of God, who, if he made our hearts, also is the creator of our nerves and blood." (1)

(1) Idem, . p. 338.

Revealed to herself at last Halma understands that it is best to let life's current run along its natural course. She marries Urrea, and Pedralba becomes her home, and its occupants her family, governed by her husband and herself. The good-will of the priest Don Remigio, who is appointed guardian of Nazarán, is secured when Urrea obtains for him an appointment to a better place, and he recommends liberty for Nazarin and the return of his clerical license. Nazarán then goes to Alcalá to comfort and counsel his followers Ándara and El Sacrilego who are held there in prison.

Especially interesting in HALMA are the characters of the two priests Don Manuel Flórez and Nazarán. Flórez is the genial, social priest of aristocracy. Nazarán, the kindly humble priest of the poor and lowly. Flórez's work is to dress well, be a good mixer, offer spiritual guidance. Nazarán's, to suffer, sacrifice and meditate. Flórez interprets the religious doctrine in the manner of his time, within established bounds. Nazarán follows it in its narrowest and strictest sense. And both are good Christians. Each thinks himself right in his own interpretation. Flórez is a champion of "the established order of things," -- he is social; Nazarán individual, and free. In Flórez "was to be admired, if not profound

virtues, superficial ones, because he did not lack uprightness and a certain austerity in his principles." ⁽¹⁾ He was not ambitious for himself, and conformed perfectly in spirit and letter, with all the Church teaches and practices. He is a champion of system and method, yet of a temperament flexible enough to adapt himself to society and defend the Catholic faith in the manner and on the occasions suitable to it. He is contented with life and believes himself a model of exemplary priesthood until he meets Nazarín, then his calm spirit becomes disturbed and is filled with doubts. He recognizes the sublimity of Nazarín's spirit, the purity of his conscience, but as the rest of society, wonders if his conduct is not the result of a slightly unhinged mind. "To carry into practice the doctrine in all its rigor and purity, -- it cannot be ---. To do so, it would be necessary to destroy the whole existing state of things. Besides does not the Holy Church live in civilization? Where would we end if --? No, it cannot be ---." ⁽²⁾

Flórez's judgment is rational. Nazarín's ideal must be individual and cannot serve for society. However, Flórez's estimation of his own moral worth is lowered in comparing himself to the errant priest, and failing to

(1) Idem., p. 44.
 (2) Idem., p. 156.

realize that he represents the social ideal and is in harmony with his environment, torments himself with what he feels to be his inferiority, his uselessness. Had he won any "great victories for human good or the Catholic faith?"⁽¹⁾ And he dies, troubled in spirit and accusing himself, "I am nothing, I have done nothing -- a useless life, a drawing-room saint, a congenial priest--⁽²⁾ Oh, what pain, -- congenial, -- a farce!"

But had Nazarín won any greater victories for human good or the Catholic faith?⁽³⁾ He had developed, however, a beautiful spirit, superior, and serene before all the vicissitudes of life, and a tolerance and human understanding which had their roots in his natural goodness and individual freedom.

(1) Idem., p. 175.

(2) Idem., p. 208.

(3) Vide supra, p. 90.

CONCLUSION

In the NOVELAS ESPAÑOLAS CONTEMPORANEAS Galdós gives a remarkable picture of society in his time. It is detailed, complete, colorful. Its realism is simple, sincere, and honest, and does not exaggerate the sordidness of life, nor idealize human existence. It is like the reflection in a mirror which Galdós holds up not only to the visible part of society, but to its heart and its soul, revealing the mental, moral and spiritual conflicts within. It proclaims both the mastery of genius and the accuracy of fine observation. Galdós is considered by many the Spanish Balzac, and his works "a storehouse of human documents." Their historical value is universally recognized: "Among all the books written with the object of presenting modern customs, and contemporary characters, there are none in Spain perhaps, which can compete with those of the author of DOÑA PERFECTA. In the future, he who wishes to know the society of our time must study the books of Galdós. No history will be more useful than the NOVELAS ESPAÑOLAS CONTEMPORANEAS."⁽¹⁾

Each novel in this large group is but a segment of that vast picture, and must be considered as such. The setting of most of them is in or around Madrid, and the characters are principally of that largest part of

(1) Pérez, Pero: Torquemada en la cruz, in LA ESPAÑA MODERNA, 1894, Vol. I, No. 42, p. 87.

society known as the middle class, and of the lower classes. Each book develops some phase of the political, social, or religious problems of society, especially in their relationship to the moral and spiritual development of the individual. Galdós, in his later novels, becomes more and more concerned with the individual in society, his freedom, and right to follow his natural inclinations.

Though Galdós was in no sense a mystic himself, his regard for the natural inclinations of the individual account for his ability to appreciate the virtues of contemplative religion. It is this breadth of understanding, in addition to his keen observation, and creative genius, which made it possible for him to produce in his novels such varied and such complex, artistically realistic characters.

From the sphere of mysticism in which Nazarín, with his pure ideals, stands as the prototype of mystic perfection, Galdós takes the religious question to a plane far below, where the pursuit of religion is for the purpose of material gain, or through superstitious fear. The author's ease in perceiving and expressing so vividly such different aspects of the same question shows not only the extreme flexibility of his talent, but also the

impartiality of his nature. This inferior grade of religious feeling so far removed from mystic sublimity, is embodied in the character of Torquemada, a type of unyielding usurer. It is probably true too, that a large part of the Christian world understands and practises religion chiefly in this form -- the utilitarian form-- for the sentiments of hope of reward, and fear of punishment have had, and still have, the greatest influence on the multitudes.

Torquemada's religion is money, and it is only after he has passed through various moral crises, and sees his own end near, that the terrifying idea of death awakens his interest in things spiritual. But his interest in them is of the same kind as in material things -- utilitarian, all for personal gain.

The Torquemada series develops in the main a social thesis. It is a detailed and original study of avarice. Galdós achieves a strong and consistent work of art in the creation of the character of Don Francisco Torquemada, in whom avarice begins and remains the supreme controlling force of his existence, in the transformation of the sordid, mean condition of the cruel, usurious money-lender to a man of great influence and power, but under whose social veneer remain the natural instincts.

In TORQUEMADA EN LA HOGUERA, his character is well defined. He is a pitiless usurer, the scourge of the wretched victims whom necessity forces to borrow from him, -- and yet there is a certain pathetic sincerity about him. His domestic life is frugal and miserly. He has two children, Rufina and Valentino. The latter is a precocious child of prodigious intellect -- especially in the field of mathematics -- and love for his wonder-child is the one human touch in the hard, crude nature of Torquemada. This love borders on an idolatry which soon takes such a great hold on him that when the child becomes unexpectedly and critically ill, it produces a real moral crisis in the despairing father, and he suddenly becomes religious. Although he had attended mass while his wife was alive, it had been out of habit rather than through any real religious sense. Now in an hour of mingled hope and fear he bargains for the life of his child by the first means that presents itself to his mind -- practising charity. The harsh landlord becomes generous and lenient and he gives money to the poor in the streets, hoping that God will reward him for his benevolence. He resolves to become a good Christian, anything, if his child's life is spared, but it is in vain. Valentino dies and the one humanizing force in

the usurer's life is gone.

In TORQUEMADA EN LA CRUZ, and TORQUEMADA EN EL PURGATORIO, the miser is put through a process of refining by Cruz Aguila and her sister Fidela. They are descendents of an old aristocratic family whom misfortune has brought to the direst poverty. Torquemada is attracted by their refinement and remarkable economic sense, and possessed by the weird illusion that his son wants to be reborn, -- an illusion conceived during sleepless nights which he spends before an improvised altar of his idol's picture, -- he marries the younger sister Fidela. The sisters see in this marriage the possibility of restoring the family dignity.

Cruz becomes the manager of the household, and of Torquemada. She skillfully and firmly changes his habits, his dress, his speech, and he, with a peculiar adaptability and a certain egotistic pride, learns rapidly and willingly. The one fly in his ointment is the enormous expenditure of money that he longs to use to build a greater capital. His social status becomes entirely changed. Through Cruz's influence and his own instinctive money sense, he goes higher and higher. His fortune increases rapidly, he becomes a Senator, he is even coerced into buying a title, becoming the Marquis of San

Eloy, and finally into buying a palace and furnishing it luxuriously.

Though Torquemada's affairs in the material world are so prosperous, he is not contented, and his gilded existence becomes a veritable purgatory, because the huge expenses throw him into a state of intense melancholy, while under the veneer still exists the avaricious instinct, and the crude man of the lower class who cannot feel at home beside his aristocratic and despotic sister-in-law. Cruz spends his money extravagantly, but in so doing she steadily opens up means toward immense increases in his earnings.

In TORQUEMADA Y SAN PEDRO, Torquemada's rancor, and fear of his sister-in-law have resulted in an active aversion, and he breaks off all friendly relations. Failing health adds another care for this man who is so fond of material existence, and it brings with it the accompaniments of loss of self-confidence, uncontrolled temper, suspicion, and impatience. He becomes obsessed by the fear that his fortune, amassed by "the sweat of his brow," will dwindle rapidly without his personal attention.

The disappointment over his son and heir, the second Valentinito, who shows tendencies toward imbecility,

the death of his wife Fidela, for whom he honestly cared, and even more important, the state of his own health awaken in him once more a consciousness of spiritual claims, and he begins to make negotiations for the salvation of his soul in the same manner that he is accustomed to negotiate business deals.

Cruz's interest in the social conversion of her brother-in-law now becomes concentrated on the state of his soul, and she enlists the services of an old friend of her family, the priest Gamborena, whom Torquemada calls San Pedro because of his likeness to a painting of the saint. Torquemada agrees to follow his guidance, put his conscience in his keeping, and bequeath half his fortune to the Church, providing he guarantee him his salvation. "But you must guarantee that, once my conscience is entirely in your power, the gates of eternal Heaven will open to me, that you will open them to me yourself, since you have the keys. There must be loyalty and good faith on both sides. Because, frankly, it would be too bad, friend missionary, if I should give you my capital, and then it would turn out that there are no such gates, no such Heaven nor Christ who founded it ---." ⁽¹⁾

The priest's struggle for Torquemada's soul, his ef-

(1) TORQUEMADA Y SAN PEDRO, Madrid, 1895, p. 165.

forts to emancipate it from the slavery of business transactions, and win it through pure faith and conscience is a long and hard one, and the result is indecisive, for when Torquemada dies murmuring the word "conversion" it is uncertain whether he is referring to his soul, or to the converting of the public debt which filled his mind during his illness. The drama in Torquemada's soul is well developed and described and is always consistent with his materialism, his love of life, and the vague fear of the hereafter. And the mystery with which the author veils the problem of his conversion is artistic and highly realistic -- it is the mystery of death.

In TORQUEMADA Y SAN PEDRO, the missionary Gamborena makes an exact criticism of the superficial religiosity and frivolity of the upper classes. His sincerity and pureness of heart see in such religion little more than exterior practices founded on respect to conventions. The rich are the ones who are most indifferent to pure doctrine. Their "protection" of religion by means of splendid religious ceremonies and charity organizations is not homage from their hearts, and is little more than surrounding God with the official and courtly pomp rendered a constitutional king who reigns but does not

(1)
govern.

Through Gamborena Galdós satirizes the custom of the rich of organizing charity balls and concerts, and of using the theater and lottery as instruments of charity, which after all is founded on the desire to amuse itself, --its one aspiration. (2) Galdós satirizes this kind of charity again in *MARIANELA*, *HALMA*, *EL AMIGO MANSO*, and others of his novels, and seems to enjoy the contrast offered in a character like Guillermina Pacheco, (3) the "rata eclesiastica" who after giving all her fortune to charity begs for donations necessary to support her orphanage.

Gamborena's soul is profoundly religious, but there is no fanaticism in him. He is endowed with unusual intelligence and breadth and does not try to impose an ideal which would be altogether exotic. He feels that it is not important if the letter of religious law is forgotten as long as its principle, its essence, remains in the heart. "If one knows with whom he is dealing, and in what times he lives, he will not commit the folly of saying: 'imitate those who being noble and rich, wished to be poor and plebeian.' No, we are living in prosaic

(1) Idem., pp.86-89.

(2) Ibid.,

(3) *FORTUNATA Y JACINTA*, Vol. 2, Madrid, 1916.

times in which there is much littleness of spirit and cowardice. The human will is degenerating visibly --- I shall not tell you to be heroic, because you would laugh at me, and justly. But I do say to you: try to be good Christians in the smallness of your spiritual limitations; go on being aristocrats and rich; couple religious simplicity with the ostentation that your social position imposes, and when the moment arrives to leave this life, if you have known how to cleanse your hearts of invading impurities, you will not find the gates to eternal happiness closed."⁽¹⁾

As may be seen in the reviews in the foregoing chapters, of Galdós' books which develop different phases of the religious question, their author strikes at the two extremes of indifference and bigotry. "We are so dead, spiritually and religiously speaking!" says the priest Casado in ANGEL GUERRA. "We agree that we Spaniards, as the leading Christians of the world, have become careless since the seventeenth century --- But Spain must recover her great initiative."⁽²⁾

In the picture, which Galdós gives in his contemporary novels of the religious state of Spanish society, are

(1) TORQUEMADA Y SAN PEDRO, p. 91.

(2) ANGEL GUERRA, Vol. III, p. 151.

emphasized principally these two extremes: indifference, which in a few takes the form of total disinterest, and in the majority is a superficial practising of forms merely out of consideration for established customs or out of an intermittent sense of fear; and over-zealousness, which all too frequently results in fanaticism. A modification of both is essential to human welfare and progress. Galdós, speaking through Angel Guerra, says he admires those who "possess a sincere faith and do not use it as a mask to exploit the world. The persons who delight in condemning everything spiritual are odious to me. Those who see in the struggles of life only a miserable crust of bread, and the ways to obtain it, seem to me to be dead men who eat. It would be best if each person might have a perfect balance of material and spiritual things --".⁽¹⁾ Galdós is opposed to all kinds of exaggeration, and especially to that excess of piety and extravagance in devotional exercises, which derive from ignorance or egotism, and are a lamentable perversion of the spirit of Christianity. Since behind this type of excess, however, the intention of the transgressor is frequently good, as in the case of Doña Perfecta, Serafinita, María Egipcíaca, Luis Gonzaga, Paoletti, or Pantoja, the blame must fall upon false re-

(1) Idem,, Vol. I, p. 201.

ligious education and beliefs. Galdós points to the worldliness of the Church as the cause of the trouble, to the stress which it lays upon form rather than meaning, to its observance of traditional customs, and the stand it has taken which in many ways is in direct opposition to the simple truth in the teachings of Christ. This does not mean, however, that Galdós is opposed to the Church. He regrets the degeneracy into which it has fallen, and recommends a throwing off of worldliness, and an approach to the original meaning of the Gospel -- to that pure religion which appeals to the hearts of men and forms the real basis of the brotherhood of man.

Galdós makes neither the Church nor the clergy targets which he proposes to destroy, but he takes sure aim at the degeneracy in both. He recognizes the great power for good of the Church organization, and the need for it in society -- as is evident to anyone who reads ANGEL GUERRA, -- but shows that bigotry and worldliness, the refusal to distinguish between the things that are God's and the things that are Caesar's, effect only injury to the institution which should stand for the highest and purest in human existence. Pardo Barzán's statement, (1) in regard to Galdós' attitude toward the church, cor-

(1) Vide supra, p. 78.

roborates the opinion expressed above, as does also that of González Blanco: "Even religiously, Galdós is more Spanish than is commonly believed. His attitude is one of Spanish liberalism which reclaims the prerogatives of civil power, and maintains itself firm before Rome, without prejudice to respect for the infallibility of the Pope, and the recognition that the Catholic Church is our mother and teacher in life, who watches over her beloved children, the Spaniards, with especial protectiveness." (1)

Neither would Galdós abolish the clergy; instead he would reform it from within. The still very close union between Church and State in Spain must result in a high ecclesiastical coloring in novels which treat of social customs, -- and if the novels are realistic the coloring must be light in spots and dark in others. Some of Galdós' finest character creations are priests, and he presents them in all manners and conditions. In DOÑA PERFECTA, ELECTRA, and LEÓN ROCH, he merely gives expression to the latent progression of anti-clerical feeling in his country. There is probably more reforming zeal in the voicing of his people's aspirations for religious liberalism here, than in his later novels, but

(1) González Blanco, Andrés: HISTORIA DE LA NOVELA, Madrid, 1909, p. 428.

his sympathies, though always on the side of advance, were too universal to have ever carried him to extremes, and in the main, he has successfully avoided injuring "dangerous susceptibilities" in his championing of the progressive movement. Also it is evident that in *DOÑA PERFECTA*, and *LEÓN ROCH*, the conflict is one of principle against principle. It is not "a combat of unintelligent controversy over atheistic negations and dogmatic affirmations, but a struggle for existence of the modern spirit in Spain."⁽¹⁾

It is logical for a man who is awake to the needs of his time, to write extensively on them in his novels which deal with contemporary society, and especially so, when the need is religious liberalism, for religion is a subject that makes one of the strongest appeals to the emotions of man, and stimulates powerfully his imagination. Galdós' contemporaries likewise saw the aesthetic possibilities of the religious thesis, and made use of it to produce masterpieces in literature. *Palacio Valdés* develops different phases of it in *LA HERMANA SAN SULPICIO*, and *MARTA Y MARÍA*, as also does Valera in his well known novel, *PEPITA JIMÉNEZ*. It seems fair to assume, therefore that Galdós' paramount concern was not

(1) Martinenche, Ernesto: *El teatro de Pérez Galdós*, in *LA ESPAÑA MODERNA*, Vol. II, 1906, p. 120.

to philosophize or make propaganda on religion, but to present the aesthetic aspects of it, and to imbue them with healthful and vigorous moral ideals.

Nothing can attest better the greatness of Galdós' genius and his splendid impartiality than the many and varied phases of religion found in his novels. And Galdós was not only by nature impartial, but fundamentally religious. Careful attention to his writings and to the testimonies of biographers and friends leave no doubt of it. We have not only the affirmation of Clarín,⁽¹⁾ but also of Menéndez y Pelayo, Spain's greatest and most Catholic critic, who says: "Galdós has suffered the contagion of the times; but he has never been a skeptic nor a frivolous thinker. Religion would not play such a large part in his novels if he did not himself feel religious aspirations in a more or less definite and concrete, but indubitable, manner. And although all his tendencies may be toward the Anglo-Saxon style of moralist, rather than the metaphysic or mystic, the most summary reading of the last books which he has published is enough to see plainly in them a higher grade of religious conscience; a

(1) Vide Supra, p. 3.

greater spirituality in the symbols used; a moderate dogmatism more apparent in the ethical parts, and from time to time, gusts of positive Christianity which come to temper the aridity of his old Stoicism."⁽¹⁾

González Blanco also adds his testimony: "Galdós believes in the Supreme Being with a firm faith, and any of his works would show it."⁽²⁾ And he adds, in treating the question of modern atheism: "If positive religions become more vacillating, the concept of religion and, consequently, the concept of God, become more firm and respected. In other times there were no atheists because God was not discussed so much ----. Today the question of atheism is a living one, as is the question of God."⁽³⁾

The general impression that Galdós cared little for conventional religion, and his championing of individual liberty, have probably been the chief causes for the belief that Galdós was anti-Catholic, and especially hostile to monastic organizations. As has already been stated, he never spoke against the dogma of the Church, and he frankly recognized its importance in society. His criticism was against its worldliness, and was aimed

(1) Menéndez y Pelayo; Op. cit. p. 113.

(2) González Blanco; Op. cit. p. 415.

(3) Ibid.

even more severely against its monastic orders, which interfered too presumptuously in the affairs of the individual, hindering and distorting its natural development, by demanding a conventional attention to things of the next world, which, in the modern conception of religion, is due only after the needs of living men have been satisfied. Angel Guerra, when preparing to become a priest refuses to enter a religious order because he says, "it would rob me of my initiative."⁽¹⁾ Nazarín, a personification of the religious ideal of Catholicism, disobeys the laws made by his superiors in this one respect only, and yields to the instinct which leads him to seek the road to spiritual growth in nature rather than within the walls of a monastery. Human love and death cheat the convent of Gloria. Some see another evidence of Galdós' opposition to monasteries and convents in the close of the play *ELECTRA* where the heroine is counseled by the spectre of her mother to forsake the convent, and not pretend to a sanctity she could not attain, to marry, and seek God in the world of men, for he is there also. Galdós leaves no doubt as to his attitude, however, He declares himself opposed to monastic orders, especially the Jesuits, who preach a barren ideal of gloomy virtue;⁽²⁾

(1) ANGEL GUERRA, Vol. III, p. 30

(2) Vide supra, p. 57.

and yet he does not fail to see beauty in man's renunciation of the will to live, and his devotion to a sublime ideal. He frankly expresses his admiration of such renunciation,⁽¹⁾ but objects to its being held up as a collective ideal for society. He also feared the effect on social welfare of the rapid increase of monasteries in his time, caused by a sudden wave of mystic fervor, which were absorbing men and women unfit by nature for contemplative and ascetic life. On the other hand one must not overlook his beautiful and sympathetic descriptions of convent life in Toledo in his novel ANGEL GUERRA.

Galdós was too liberal and understanding not to realize that contemplative and mystic religions have their place, but his own religion was one of action -- the will to work to create a better world, and to him, the joy of achievement was life's justification. His religion might be called natural, for it had its source principally in his own fine instincts, was developed through contact with his fellowmen, and adapted in as much as was possible, to the faith of the society in which he lived -- the form of whose faith was Catholic.

Galdós himself was in no sense a mystic. He was a

(1) Vide supra, p. 54.

practical man and a free-thinker, who believed in intellectual, and moral, as well as physical freedom. He was one of the first of the new school of writers to make use of the opportunity which the Revolution of 1868 gave by widening the boundaries of freedom in literature, writing eloquently on the ideas which were most necessary to Spain, and creating and developing an intellectual atmosphere for his successors. Galdós was deeply interested in his country's welfare, and he made it his purpose to arouse his people to a consciousness of self, -- to a sense of the importance of right thinking on the vital questions relating to society. As he laid bare its weaknesses and defects, he also paid tribute to its splendid fundamental qualities.

Galdós stood for progress, for modern thinking and development. One might say that his watchword was the "adelante" used so frequently by Teodoro Golfín in *MARIANELA*, and he probably has done more than any of his contemporaries in introducing and applying modern ideas and ways to Spain.

Galdós was a creator primarily, and he worked tirelessly at his task. His huge production, over a hundred novels and dramas, embraces the history of social life

in Spain throughout the XIX century, and his characters live in large numbers, -- there are probably over two thousand of them. And he was not only superior as a creative genius, but he possessed an unusual talent for fine observation, to which he added a profound moral sense, modern thought, and human understanding. These pervade all his works and make them both artistic and stimulating pictures, which cannot fail to have a considerable effect upon conduct.

Galdós belongs with his whole soul to the modern realistic movement. He was never a metaphysical thinker, because he could not lose sight of the philosophy of application. He does not care for speculation as such, but only as it applies to tangible things of life. Reality holds the greatest interest for him. He used it as a name for one of his novels, which he later worked over into drama form, in which he has one of his characters say: "Reality is the greatest of all inventors; the artist that is ever original and inexhaustible in resource."⁽¹⁾

The theme of REALIDAD adheres to all the title implies, and treats of the subject of a wife's infidelity as it might actually pass, instead of in the usual

(1) REALIDAD, Madrid, 1916, p. 37.

novelistic and Calderonian style. The wife, Augusta, weary of her conventional and uneventful existence and of the tranquil greatness of her husband's spirit, falls in love with a young libertine, whose conflicting instincts of good and bad cause him finally to commit suicide through remorse at his betrayal of a friend's confidence. The husband pardons the fault committed by his wife, but disappointed that her moral nature is not of a sufficiently high calibre to make her confess it to him, he stifles the human passions aroused in him, abandons his dream of spiritual companionship, and continues to live alone in the moral greatness of his own soul.

The principal interest of the story lies in the development of the character of the husband Orozco, a wealthy banker, and the incidents in the action of the story serve primarily to reveal it. He is a man of sublime goodness, tolerant and elevated ideas. A great philanthropist, whose charity is motivated by an all embracing love for his fellowmen, and carefully self-disciplined, he reaches a stage of moral perfection which causes others of smaller mentality to doubt at times his sanity. He is a synthesis of all that is fine and noble in humanity, a model of self-control, a quality which Galdós so admires and holds up as one of the virtues necessary

to human progress. He embodies many of Galdós' ideals of modern manhood.

Great as may be the admiration due the mystics who renounce the world and seek spiritual perfection in meditation, asceticism, and isolation, Galdós found more worthy of admiration the moral greatness which is developed in the whirl of life. "In the world," Orozco says, "in the activities of social life is where one ought to struggle for good. Let us have nothing of asceticism: those who go to a desert have no merit in being pure."⁽¹⁾ This same sentiment Galdós expressed before through
(2)
Angel Guerra.

Galdós has "the gift of humanity." In all his books is evident that attitude of kindly understanding which can come only from a sincere and generous love of one's fellow men. "We come to the simple conclusion," says R. W. Weldeck, "that the power and the charm of Galdós reside in his penetrant humanity, whether we consider him as a novelist, a dramatist, or a reformer."⁽³⁾

Love is a keen discerner of truths, and because of Galdós' sincere love for his fellow men, he could read

(1) Idem,, p. 72.

(2) ANGEL GUERRA, Vol. III, p. 187.

(3) Weldeck, R. W: Galdós, Novelist, Dramatist and Reformer, in THE CRITIC, Vol. XLV, 1904, p. 249.

accurately in the complexities of human nature,-- "living books written in languages sometimes hard to understand,"⁽¹⁾ he calls men. He could look with understanding and kindly eyes upon human weaknesses, and find good where others could see only bad, and by his own superb faith in men bring out the best in them. It was this spirit which led him to reveal so skillfully, in what were seemingly uninteresting or hopelessly weak or even repulsive characters, qualities of goodness and even strength, and to show that perverseness is not always an obsession of the devil as formerly believed, or of willful wrong doing, but the result of poverty and necessity. Innumerable examples of this may be found in his books: the old derelict,⁽²⁾ Don Pito, the poor abused sexton Calfas,⁽³⁾ Urrea,⁽⁴⁾ El Sacriligo,⁽⁵⁾ etc. No author could deal with a finer sense of charity and sympathy with the poor and lowly than does Galdós in such novels as LA DESHEREDADA; or in MISERICORDIA, in which he presents a vivid picture of the life of beggars in Madrid. His realistic pictures of poverty with its accompaniments of physical and moral

(1) ANGEL GUERRA, Vol. III, p. 29.

(2) ANGEL GUERRA.

(3) GLORIA.

(4) HALMA,

(5) NAZARIN.

miseries do not leave an impression of repugnance. He shows these people struggling for existence in their own way, and possessing a philosophy of their own, and the picture is brightened here and there by touches of his unfailing and gentle humor.

Galdós does not show quite the same sympathy with those, who through false standards or education, endure real privation and suffering in a vain and senseless effort to keep up appearances. His books are filled with these types: the Tellería family, ⁽¹⁾ the Miaus, ⁽²⁾ the Bringas women, ⁽³⁾ Doña Cándida, ⁽⁴⁾ Doña Francisca Juárez, ⁽⁵⁾ and others. He does not even here, however, assume the cold manner of a moralist and enlarge upon the revolting details of the resulting misery, but directs attention rather to the pathos in the situation, and to the folly and lack of intelligence which perpetuates such a state of affairs.

Many find an impression of gloom in Galdós' novels and believe him a pessimist. Such a tone is probably due to the fact that Galdós takes life as it comes, and presents it as it appeared to him in a critical period

- (1) LA FAMILIA DE LEÓN ROCH.
- (2) MIAU.
- (3) LA DE BRINGAS.
- (4) EL AMIGO MANSO.
- (5) MISERICORDIA.

of his nation's history; and he unfolds it without either undue pessimism or optimism. "One who sees life clearly must perchance see it darkly, and few see it more clearly than Galdós. Yet his admirers will not have it that he is pessimistic, because Nature herself is not pessimistic. Even the sadness of nightfall ought not to be considered gloomy, they say with much show of reason, since it is only the preparation for another day."⁽¹⁾

Beneath that sense of tragedy in life, the impatience at the almost hopeless contradictions in which ignorance and intolerance involve humanity, there is always an undercurrent of hope, a faith in the future and in the regenerative power of man. There are definite refer-⁽²⁾ences to this in his works; and his optimistic faith in Spain's future may be found in his own statement on the matter: "Now that the national faith seems to be chilled and dim; now that some look upon us as the branch most exposed to being torn from our national tree, let us give the example of confidence in the

(1) Bishop, W. H.: Benito Pérez Galdós, in WARNER'S LIBRARY OF THE WORLD'S BEST LITERATURE, Vol. XI, p. 6163.

(2) HALMA, p. 346; LEÓN ROCH, Vol. II, pp. 302-374; GLORIA, Vol. II, p. 365, et passim.

future. Let us not be vain-glorious; but neither pessimistic nor gloomy."⁽¹⁾

It is Galdós' belief that social and religious reform cannot be effected by merely enlarging mental conceptions; it must be reached through an appeal to the higher emotions -- faith, hope, and love. On these rests the realization of the dream he had of a more peaceable, tolerant, happy and worthwhile individual, and social group. Galdós devoted his life to calling forth the generous and charitable instincts of man, and as he grew older his faith in love as the real positive force of the world became even stronger. Love of one's fellow men, -- it is an ideal that he puts into the mouths of many of his characters. León Roch says, "Love of God is nothing more than the sublimation of love for His creatures."⁽²⁾ Angel Guerra learns that "the only thing one gains in this game of life is: the pleasure and joy of loving."⁽³⁾ The priest Don Manuel Flórez finds, -- "Another's happiness! -- it is the only thing which must bring rejoicing to a great soul."⁽⁴⁾ And Maximiliano Rubín decides, "love is the law of laws; love can rule the world."⁽⁵⁾

(1) Pagano, León: Op, cit., p. 108.

(2) LA FAMILIA DE LEÓN ROCH, Vol. III, p. 296.

(3) ANGEL GUERRA, Vol. III, p. 362.

(4) HALMA, p. 208.

(5) FORTUNATA Y JACINTA, Vol. II, p. 92.

"Galdós began by telling the history of Spain, not official, but real, by penetrating the profoundest depths of its soul, and because he loved its beauty, he did not believe that he ought to hide from it its weaknesses and imperfections. Later he obliged it to see itself in the theater. It did not always recognize its image, but always felt itself enveloped in an extraordinarily pure and fresh atmosphere. Galdós could not have rendered it better service. She had shut herself up and was languishing in the barren sentiment of a past glory. With more filial sentiment than revolutionary ardor, Galdós shook off the dust that covered it and taught it the healthful remedy of walking in the open air in the full light of day."⁽¹⁾

FINIS

(1) Martinenche, Ernesto: Op, cit., p. 158.

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1916 --EL TACAÑO SALOMON

1918 --SANTA JUANA DE CASTILLA

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